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# THE INTEGRITY OF SCRIPTURE

PLAIN REASONS FOR REJECTING THE  
CRITICAL HYPOTHESIS. BY THE REV.  
JOHN SMITH, M.A., D.D., BROUGHTON  
PLACE CHURCH, EDINBURGH

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## PREFACE

THESE chapters were delivered in the form of monthly lectures to the author's congregation during the winter and spring just past. They are not to be considered as a discussion of criticism from a purely critical standpoint, though it is believed they expose the fundamental logical fallacies pervading the critical method. They are an answer to a direct challenge from the side of criticism, giving "plain reasons" such as might occur to a minister or an educated layman why this hypothesis should be rejected. It is to be hoped that they come close enough to the kernel of the question to be decisive in their objections. But firmly believing that this movement is even already fading away, being smitten by its own excesses, the writer has sought to locate it in the general stream of modern thought, and to bring out the more recent points of view, both in the study of antiquity, and in the philosophic recognition of the spiritual, which frown on the whole speculation.

While written from month to month, amid innumerable congregational and public duties,—in a practical interest, and to meet a great emergency,—these lectures are not to be regarded as a hurried effort in the spirit of panic to denounce what cannot be disproved.

As an outside spectator the writer has been cognisant of every phase of the critical movement in Scotland. A class-fellow for a single year of the late Professor Robertson Smith in Aberdeen University, and brought, through possession of the same surname, into daily contact with him on the same bench, the writer was pre-disposed by admiration for one who was even then a great scholar, to take his standpoint. William Robertson Smith went forward to an early fame, which fascinated those who looked up

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to him from lowly fields of service. Even at the beginning, however, the conviction that the startling phenomenon of the Higher Criticism was a new departure, from which there was no safe issue but in return, took full possession of the writer's mind. And as events developed, the instinctive judgment became a reasoned belief.

The reader may catch here and there a tone of severity which we would not have him misjudge. The writer takes a very serious view of the effects upon not a few of our younger ministers, upon intelligent laymen, and our people generally, of destructive criticism. And he cannot hold free from blame those who, however far from intending it, have used the prominent position to which they have been raised by the Church, to divide believers, paralyse the faith of many, and strengthen the hands of our enemies, who are seeking to break down respect for revealed religion in the land. Such severity is perfectly compatible with an entire absence of personal feeling, yea, with true admiration for many admirable qualities in those whom he opposes. Nothing was further from the writer's thoughts than to undertake this labour, if others more able had only stepped into the breach. He looked for such until the silence grew painful and ominous.

May he, with the utmost humility, affirm that he has been conscious of a constraint which he dare not resist, and such a comfortable presence of the enlightening Spirit as made toil light. He has been much helped by his friend Rev. C. G. Moore, who superintended the serial publication in a religious journal, and desires to express indebtedness to those who have cheered him in his solitary task by warm but discriminating sympathy.

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# I

## THE SEARCHING ISSUES

Luke i. 1: "Those things which are most surely believed among us."

IT is with no light heart, nor without serious searching of mind as to our personal fitness for this duty, that, for all whom we can influence, we take up the challenge which has been thrown down, to show cause why we should not accept the conclusions of the Higher Criticism, and incorporate them, with the modifications thereby incurred, in the substance of our faith. From the start we make no doubt as to what the answer of the Church should be. THESE CONCLUSIONS ARE INADMISSIBLE; inherently, because of objections which may be taken to them and to the considerations on which they are based. And, such as they are, they conflict with the profoundest certitudes of the faith, must inevitably alter the foundations on which from the beginning our holy religion has stood before the world, and, consequently, so far as a theory can, must obstruct her mission and abridge her influence.

Not without much careful weighing of a perplexed situation have we assumed this, to us,

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foreign and untried task. Vast and searching though the issues may be which are involved in this impending controversy (for one side having settled the conclusions by which it elects to stand, the controversy has only begun), we are of opinion that, in fairness to all, this is no time for hurried prosecutions in the courts of the Church. What is called for rather is a frank and free discussion in the open, until the case from the side of theology and religion, which, in any serious sense, is practically unwrought, be as fully and as unambiguously put, as is now the case on the side of criticism. Partisan decisions, before men fully see the length and breadth of what they are committing themselves to, are infinitely to be deplored. Such a situation has not emerged without the permission of Eternal Providence, who, through the conflicts of men, has again and again carried us into possession of our most precious truths. Let us then, without panic, in faith and spiritual courage, apply ourselves to the matters involved in this particular controversy, each making bold to utter the convictions wrought in him; and while we may have to come, as I believe we shall, to sharp contrast and a parting of the ways, we shall have acquitted ourselves worthily in an arduous conflict.

But we have another reason for suggesting this course. If the higher critics, whom the Church

has preferred to positions of trust, have lying on them their own responsibility, in that they have not only committed themselves to the critical positions before the country (so far implicating the Church, to her present distress), but taught them to successive classes of students, our beloved United Free Church of Scotland, in both the branches of which she is now happily composed, has her own burden, of which she cannot divest herself.<sup>1</sup> For twenty years, more or less, she has tacitly permitted this teaching in her colleges. She forbore to repress inquiry. In other words, she remained silent, in the hope that this line of teaching might prove fruitful in some direction, and not inconsistent with her creed. Now, then, that conclusions have been reached, which, in the judgment of a great number of our ministers, and to the shrewd commonsense of our people, are inconsistent with those views of the authority and inspiration of Scripture which are central to our whole system, the Church has something else to do than straight away pass to judgment. We should be slow to make examples of individuals who have, mayhap, too sharply defined what has been floating in surmise and half conviction, and as a tacit working theory, in a multitude of minds.

<sup>1</sup> We have permitted this paragraph with its special reference to Scotland to remain, because it reflects more or less accurately the condition of things in many other Churches.

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This matter cannot be fully and finally dealt with until, from the side of the Church as well as from the side of criticism, the real issues are thoroughly worked out. Those who somewhat unseasonably have been pushing the battle to the gate have apparently no idea of the concern and revulsion of vast numbers, who are living in the daily fellowship of Christ, from their conclusions. Without being able to state their reasons, these people stand rootedly and immovably convinced that what is at stake is the reality or unreality, of what has hitherto been known and believed as the revelation of God. Would it not be well to take time, and state plainly the true ground and rational extent of that conviction?

On the other hand, many profess, on very various levels of assurance, their unconcern as to the consequences of adopting the newer criticism; and yet it is perfectly plain that they have not related these conclusions to the sum of their Christian beliefs. This is now a great, wide-ranging controversy. Few men can keep all the elements of a complex problem in their minds, and cast a true balance from the conflicting considerations presented to them. One is fascinated by one aspect, another by another, for the sake of which they adhere to the standpoint of the general theory, to find, mayhap, that they are in logical consistency committed to consequences which they

abhor. Again, we affirm that we are called as Christian people to a frank discussion of all the elements entering into this subject, theological and religious, no less than literary and historical, so that if come to a conflict we must, the issues may be unambiguous, and combatants on either side may know where they stand.

Permit one other preliminary point. Many will be disposed to ask, why bring so involved and difficult a question before the people? Because the issue directly affects the people. The Bible is the heritage of the people, the spring of their personal religion, and the foundation of Christian fellowship and Church authority. They may not be able to follow critical processes; their judgments, being untrained, may be of little worth regarding the pros and cons of critical evidence. But when the critics have committed themselves to a view of how the Old Testament Scriptures came to be—especially a hypothetical view, whose only validity must lie in its answering to all the facts—the common judgment can settle, yea, will have to settle, whether that can be regarded as an adequate or probable explanation.

And now to bring things to a point, allow us without further preliminaries to raise the searching issues as between the self-witness of Revelation coming down to us from remote centuries, and the modern critical view, which, originating in last

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century, has risen to such a head within the last twenty-five years, not only in Germany, but in Britain and America. And here, of course, we must follow our own method, looking first at THE SELF-WITNESS OF REVELATION, and then at THE CRITICAL HYPOTHESIS in relation thereto.

With the critics their theory has been the first consideration, the perfecting of their hypothetical explanation of how Scripture was actually built up. And they have not hesitated to cut and carve, to excise and insert—indeed, to break down and build up the existing literature in harmony with their view, in a manner and to a degree that have no parallel. We begin, however, with the things which are most surely believed among us, with the Kingdom of God as matter of present experience, as built up by the action of unseen forces; and as proving through renewed and sanctified characters the central force of time. The literature which is matter of investigation is literature that is, in a sense, living, the soul the quality of which are perpetuating themselves, minds, spiritual kingdom.

A word is what it does. Whether we inquired much about how it came to be written, or what we know little, any collection of words—a general volume of Scriptures—is to be judged in logical of source and quality, and illumination, and in they by actual result on the lives of men. We



the living kingdom of God to-day we have millions in many lands and on all social levels, and among them the purest characters and the most active and progressive intellects, who are unanimous in this, that in and through this literature they have been brought into personal contact with God, and that by His spirit God has come into them, creating them anew, and dwelling in them. In proof of this one might cite the Christian creeds, which formulate the convictions of the churches, but we prefer to cite the hymns which utter their living faith.

Here, then, is a kingdom set up in this world, of which, taken on its own unchanging testimony, this is the character. It moves from within by forces perpetually flowing out from the unseen, each unit selected by a Divine call, renewed by a Divine spirit, sustained by the interactions of a Divine life. All its activities show that it leans on resources from beyond, prayer imploring the eternal succours, faith receiving, love making common for heavenly powers received.

Settled living root of this kingdom, the channel or path through which light comes, the basis on which

man meets, is the Holy Scriptures. And when we come to these, and more especially to the New Testament, we find that the living source comes in answers to these effects. As a radiant model by the sun, they are interpenetrated by the

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consciousness that they contain and are a communication from God to men, made in historic time, having for end the setting up of a Kingdom of God, in which, uniting the created into fellowship with the uncreated, the eternal purpose of God shall be completed. No proofs need to be led. The fact is so palpable. Hear one word of Christ: "The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." Note how Paul, in many places of his Epistles, is almost carried out of himself by the fact that the mystery hid from ages is now made manifest.

But there is another consciousness penetrating the New Testament Revelation—that this communication of God does not stand alone. In fragmentary words and less perfect forms, this same God had in earlier ages discovered Himself, establishing relations between Israel and Himself, and from the nucleus of covenant promise starting and controlling covenant history. The New Testament is unanimous in all parts about this. Paul sees in the covenant of God with Abraham the pivot of the whole movement through the Old and New Testaments; and in the dispensation of law under Moses a necessary discipline of the covenant people. And while, like the writers of Scripture who speak of weak and beggarly elements, Christ discerns what was provisional, and, as adjusted to infantile perception,

beneath the full height and range of Revelation, yet no servant of His has shown with such grand decisiveness as He has done His belief that the Old Testament was an integral part of God's self-revelation, despite all deciduous elements, inherently one and on the same plane with all further developments of Revelation. "I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." "One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled."<sup>1</sup>

Inherent in Revelation then there is a self-witness. The latest portion points to the beginning; the beginning, with all that may be limited and provisional, contains the germ of the end. God's discovery of Himself, as we might expect, is not an episode, but rooted in a vast breadth of the world's life, intertwined with human history, and growing from less to more, as in this Divine education and discipline, man became capable of receiving the full self-unveiling of God. In the history of ideas we have impressive examples of how from fragments of thought a great rounded system like for instance that of Platonism developed, filling the prospect for a while, then giving place to other systems, and living on as an influence permeating other thought, but at last reappearing in the sharpened and accentuated form of Neo-Platonism. Those who study such subjects lay great stress on

<sup>1</sup> Matthew v. 17, 18.

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the continuity and coherence of ideas. The connection which they seek to establish is an inner connection of thought, and they are content with a slender basis of external fact.

In the Scriptures we have to do with an internal coherence of thought, but on a higher plane. What we find in relation are creative thoughts of God, or rather discoveries of His positive purposes for men. In each case He meets men on their level, in the line of ideas fermenting in their own minds. When they have exhausted the content of this creative thought, or lost by unbelief their chance of realising it, again, in closest contact with the actual condition of the nation, God discovers Himself in a great counsel of mercy, on a totally different plane, and within original horizons. And anew the history moves on under the impact of these great ideas, until human sin causes the nation to swerve round from the line of God's will, and involves in ruin the first blossoming of national life in God. Then there broke amid the ruins, through the prophets, a richer consciousness of God, and a glorious flourish of new ideals, which His truth and love guaranteed. And lastly, across many centuries, in a way utterly unlooked for, these ideals were realised in Christ, and the full purpose of God stood revealed.

You understand, we are simply describing the self-witness of revelation as it lies in our hands, without

settling for the present whether it is to be received or not. Here was a history, not merely of ideas, but of Divine creative purposes, stretching over far more than a thousand years, breathing a spirit in utter contrast to that of the world, and discovering a unity of Divine design, now that we see the goal, not only beyond the foresight of man, but in height and range superhuman.

For eighteen hundred years the Church of God has consciously lived and grown great within the vast dome of this Divine purpose, discovered in the Old and New Testaments thus seen to be one. In another place we have said: "The Church of Christ has entered once for all and irrevocably into that conception of the unity of Revelation, as shown by the unity of one Divine conscious purpose passing through it. Faith having once seen this can never unsee it, any more than Science, having grasped the Copernican theory, can wink that knowledge away."<sup>1</sup> As every object in nature—the lichen on the wall, the pine on the hill-face—lies under the eye of the sun within the dome of heaven, so everything in this Book stood transfigured because of relation to God and the evolution of His purpose. Living within this unity of Divine aim, the Church of eighteen centuries has lived on this Word. Through every part God's creative thought has passed into her testimony.

<sup>1</sup> "Permanent Message of the Exodus" (preface).

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She has been conscious of a spirit not of man making every nook and corner live, and bringing the past in manifold application to the present. And entering into the lives of each generation this creative thought has produced a type of character never known before, bursting all common barriers of motive and aim, as a well reflects the sky reflecting what of God it has received, His will its law, the service of man its business, eternity its goal.

And not only did this Revelation with its all-embracing conception start, but all along it has been the life of the Kingdom. After ages of decadence and growing corruption recurrence to the Word by Augustine, Francis, Savonarola, Luther, Knox, Wesley, brought in each case a new day. The proofs of what it is are discovered in the quality of its effects, written upon millions of lives and their social and public activities through generations. Yea, we have that within ourselves, witnessed to by our inmost spirit, which argument or speculation cannot touch, as to the character of this Book, and the undeniable verity of that self-witness written broad on every page.

Such is Revelation, realised and experienced from within, in the living consciousness of millions of the human race. That is fact, then, resting on a breadth of foundation in spiritual experience which no other fact comes near. And no other

kind of fact can invalidate that result. The spiritual Revelation stands authenticated by spiritual result on a range and of a kind which leaves all arguments and discussions of the schools far behind. Atheists and agnostics, like Clifford and Spencer, who have not the effect may deny the cause, and try to explain the universe without any room or place for the spiritual. But religion is so rooted in literature and life that what they expose is their own bias, what they discount their halting judgment. The sun does not apologise for its existence. And what we have to do is not to trim and palter with facts, but assert our full consciousness and put forth the full energy of the spiritual, leaving the facts to tell.

But coming now to the second part, if such be the self-witness of Revelation, how has there grown up this vast movement of criticism, and especially those conclusions adverse to the historic truth of large portions of Scripture, which are filling multitudes with dismay? More particularly, how have these movements arisen within the Church, and by the efforts of men who show that they have a real reverence for Christ, and an appreciation of spiritual truth? To multitudes this is a baffling mystery, and source of most serious concern. Their very respect for these teachers on other grounds, and for the position which they occupy, makes them fear that there must be far more in it



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than they can understand, and that, at any moment, a mine may explode beneath their feet involving them in the ruins of faith.

Now we must begin by saying frankly that there is a necessary place for criticism. Revelation, if we may say so, has a body as well as a soul. It grew up in time, within certain historical conditions, was written by persons, situated in certain positions and having undergone such and such discipline for the work. And here the appeal must be to fact, internal and external, everything being welcomed which really throws light on the situation. Protestantism stands on truth, and does not invoke authority to crush inconvenient questionings. She is willing to face investigation from whatever quarter it comes. For instance, in our present humble inquiry we are not inveighing against criticism. Neither do we pretend that we have cut-and-dry answers to all critical questions, and solutions of all actual and imaginary difficulties. Criticism must proceed. We lay no embargo on human research. All that we affirm is, that this particular theory or hypothesis as to the manner in which the Old Testament Scriptures came to be formed does not meet the case, is purely speculative, improbable, marked by internal incoherences, and therefore should be dismissed.

One further remark regarding criticism in general is demanded. We have said criticism has its place ;

but that is a very limited place. As we see, in relation to the New Testament, its function is, from external data, to settle questions of time, place, authorship—a useful and necessary, if somewhat limited rôle, lying out of the world's eye, and only when a genius once in a hundred years makes some notable discovery, winning popular applause. The Scriptures themselves make appeal to another than the critical sense. They address that in man which fronts God. By what they discover to the human soul on that plane, by what they work in and through human life are they to be judged. For that kind of result the critic has no test which the spiritual man does not equally possess. And if, going beyond his province, where alone he is to be listened to as an expert, he interferes with the substance of revelation, presuming to disintegrate what has stood as a religious unity for thousands of years, with only the light reeds of his critical suppositions, he may find himself involved in conflict with a force which, in comparison, is like an avalanche to an aspen—the continuous consciousness of the Christian centuries, and what God has discovered of His eternal counsel to millions in our own day.

We have made these remarks because we believe they apply with peculiar force to the movement which has coined the name "Higher Criticism" to cover the wider scope which it

demands for its methods. We are quite willing to give criticism all the scope which it can prove itself able to occupy, with those literary, linguistic, and historical tests which are its stock-in-trade. But even though we are not able to follow the critics in all their subtle discriminations and weighings of evidence, we are not blindly to take their verdict until we have seen with what presuppositions they have worked, the general views to which they have referred particular judgments, the standards by which they have tested fact and fiction, and what has been their ground conception of the course that events pursued.

Now, here, we are carried into the heart of the situation with which in these seven chapters we have to deal. "The whirligig of time brings about its revenges." Time gives all its favours to the new men and the new theories. They have only to come in as chartered libertines, expose faults, throw new lights, disintegrate, reconstruct. By-and-by the new criticism completes its scheme, lays down its main position, and the stream of time flows on to new shores. Already, although the critics do not like to think such a thing, this higher criticism belongs to the past, or at least the passing. We can trace the relations of this to other theories of a vanishing generation, from which we have moved forward. The very grounds in current speculation on which they rested have shifted, and,

within new horizons of thought and belief, are we called definitely to weigh its claims.

We have all been struck with the immense difference of tone between the address of the President of the British Association in Glasgow this year, and the flamboyant utterance of the late Prof. Tyndall at Belfast in 1874. The latter told us with one bold sweep, that the promise and potency of all existence lay latent in a fiery cloud. Religion, conscience, mind, life, matter, all came from that whirling orb. How different, how timid and apologetic the plea of the present chosen representative of British science, even for such familiar pre-requisites of a material universe as atoms and ether! That is a symbol of a wide-reaching change. We are not so sure of those wide generalisations. We have not the same delight as those men of an earlier day, in supposing that, by long processes of development, we can get out of the conclusion, what we did not put into the premises. In biology, psychology, morals, the science of religion, and in other directions the school of thorough-paced material evolution has received the shrewdest blows; and to that general movement of speculation this critical theory belongs—with exceptions, rather apparent than real, to be afterward noted.

Let us now, in the most succinct fashion, describe this critical theory, confining ourselves

rather to the features which are common to the school than to individual varieties of opinion. In studying any movement the great thing is to find the organic principle which underlies and animates the whole. We shall begin, then, with the two writers who gave the Higher Criticism European vogue, and who, in unequal measure it is true, inspired those who have imported it as a living issue into the heart of British Christianity.

One cannot travel far, then, into Kuenen's "The Religion of Israel" and Wellhausen's writings before finding that these critics are not engaged in a purely scientific inquiry into such facts as might throw light on the literary origins of Old Testament Scripture. They are engaged in something much more speculative and ambitious—to reconstruct, on a naturalistic basis, both history and literature. In other words, the books are to be stretched on the Procrustes bed of a theory which, to begin with, allows no direct action to the supernatural, and presupposes that in Israel, religion grew up from the same beginnings and through the same stages as in all other nations, although reaching higher than others at the goal.

Hear Kuenen, who has the merits of lucidity and frankness: "The representation of Israel's earliest history presented to us in the books named after Moses and Joshua must be rejected as, in its entirety, impossible" (p. 22, vol. i.). "The Old

Testament narratives of Israel's earliest fortunes are entirely upon a par with the accounts which other nations have handed down to us concerning their earlier history. Their principal element is legend" (p. 22). In finding out what the real course of the history was he tells us that conjecture or divination plays an important part. "We offer, for instance, a supposition with respect to the Mosaic period: on the strength of various indications we assume that the people of Israel and the man who had delivered them out of their bondage in Egypt, had reached such and such a degree of religious development" (p. 26). And then, as he goes on to say, he looks for confirmation of this supposition to what comes after. But he condescends still further as to his method at a later stage. Assuming as incontrovertible fact a theory of the growth of religion which is already seriously shaken, he says later in the same volume: "To what one might call the universal, or, at least, the common rule, that religion begins with fetishism, then develops into polytheism, and then, but not before, ascends to monotheism . . . the Semites are no exception" (p. 225, vol. i.).

The teaching of Wellhausen, if somewhat differently expressed, is not dissimilar. We quote his article on Israel in "The Encyclopædia Britannica" as being most within reach. He, as entirely as Kuenen, refuses to accept the Old Testament account

of itself. "For Moses to have given the Israelites an enlightened conception of God would have been to have given them a stone instead of bread." As to the essential nature of God, "he allowed them to continue in the same way of thinking with their fathers." "We cannot treat the legislative portions of the Pentateuch as a source from which our knowledge of what Mosaism really was can be derived." "It cannot in any sense be regarded as the starting-point of the subsequent development"—thus denying directly the Old Testament's claim for itself. "The Torah—*i.e.* the Law, consisted entirely of the oral decisions and instructions of the priests." Moses was not "the promulgator once for all of a national constitution," but was the first "to begin the series of oral decisions which were continued after him by the priests." "The giving of the Law at Sinai has only a formal, not to say dramatic, significance." "For the sake of producing a solemn and vivid impression, that is represented as having taken place in a single thrilling moment which in reality occurred slowly and almost unobserved." Even the Decalogue in its pronounced monotheism "could not have formed the foundation of the national religion. It was first developed out of the national religion at the downfall of the nation, and thereupon kept its hold upon the people in an artificial manner by means of the idea of a covenant formed by the



God of the Universe with, in the first instance, Israel alone."

Now, while we do not for a moment deny the great talent and wide resources of these teachers, nor of Ewald and many others who might be named, yet that cannot hide from us the subjective character of this criticism. Bacon in his immortal maxim tells us that man can know no more than what he observes. In no field of existence do we find stubborn facts falling into the line of our suppositions. We must conform ourselves to the objective reality, and form our theory out of the facts. An inquiry so surrounded by presuppositions, and limited and deflected by private rulings as to probability, is handicapped from the start. A strong effort is being made to create the impression that criticism has nothing to do with theory, but in vain. Even those who stick to linguistic details, start from certain premises and work to certain conclusions which are those of the theory. This we shall prove in the third chapter.

But, someone may say, the criticism with which we have to deal, while it reconstructs Old Testament Scripture according to the general conception we have been describing, distinctly recognises a profoundly religious element in the various parts. Yea, in the volume which has aroused the controversy now beginning in Scotland Professor

George Adam Smith expresses his firm belief, that in the religion of Israel as recorded in the Old Testament there was an authentic revelation of the One True God. And this is being quoted by many as sufficient ground for reassurance, and an end of all debate. So far as his theory is concerned, however, it introduces a profound inconsistency, and multiplies his difficulties tenfold.

Be it noted, like all the other critics, he rejects without discussion the belief of eighteen centuries, that, like the New Testament, the Old Testament dispensation begins with the revelation of a Divine purpose to Israel through Moses, which controls the whole subsequent development. That is ruled out as not to be thought of for a moment. Israel's history must have followed the same general lines as those of other nations. The early history is dissipated into myth or legend. The stories of the Hebrew Patriarchs are efforts to account for the geographical distribution of neighbouring nations—there being, perhaps, a substratum of personal fact in the case of Abraham. The historic reality of Moses is allowed, but what residuum of contemporary tradition remains after the disintegration of the Pentateuch is left in profound uncertainty. We do not emerge on historic ground till we reach the times of Samuel. All through the centuries which followed, the Jew was pretty much on a level with surrounding

nations. Even to the verge of the prophetic age, his religion was polytheism with an opening to monotheism. And then, when the Prophets had heightened and widened the conception of Jehovah, unknown writers—"redactors" as they are called—embodying what fragments of law and tradition had come down to them, produced an idealised picture of their national beginnings in accordance with the purer ideas of their own times, but from nine to eleven hundred years later than the personages and events which they describe. And these, being pieced together, now constitute our Pentateuch. In other words, the self-discovery of God to Abraham and Moses, His miraculous acts by which He witnessed to His presence, His divine counsel as an articulated whole, His relations with His people, quick, as all saints have felt, with a holy, searching spirit, are the unlicensed imaginations of unknown penmen, trying to glorify the crude and fragmentary fact of remote tradition,—as much a work of imagination as Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*.

And when they have desecrated these books containing the Mosaic revelation, and disintegrated them into many fragments, in order to satisfy a so-called scientific necessity that the history of Israel should conform to a certain order of progression which it was presumed all other nations had followed; when, after all that, it turns out that

even from the fragments and through the veils of reported myth and legend there breaks a spirit which is not the spirit of man, and gleams of a purpose higher than ever entered into human thought, they turn round and say: "Here is an authentic revelation of God."

But we rejoin—this is for you a new factor. If a direct personal influence of God had any place in shaping Israel's history, you must allow for it. That impact of the Divine must have had a controlling influence in the process, if we are to allow it in the result. You must ask, then, if you would give a complete view of how the religion and literature of Israel grew up: Have we any independent testimony how God acts when He comes into personal contact with men? The answer is not dubious. As we see in the New Testament, God comes in the glory of a complete revelation which creates or controls the dispensation. What, then, is the irresistible inference but that God did the same in Old Testament times? Yet that is the very conception which our critic has, to begin with, rejected.

There is a difficulty from which there is no escape. The self-witness of Scripture is complete on this point. Christ and Paul bear witness to this as the true *rationale* of Old Testament history. And yet, at all hazards, the critics cling to their theory of the natural genesis of man and his

religion, and embark on the most perilous enterprise which we can conceive, trying to imagine how, according to their theory, and without miracle or anything exceptional, God—the same God who is now revealed in Christ—may have moved silently into Hebrew life and literature, informing legend, lurking amid the pollutions of a remanent polytheism, and making the ideal pictures of late unknown writers have all the effect of primitive revelation. That is not science. Scientific men do not advance by moving away from such facts as are available, and imagining a succession of events for which there is no independent support. But that thought is blotted out by the sense of towering presumption. “Who can by searching find out God?” It is enough—more than enough for man, without the aid of the Holy Ghost—even to hear Him and obey.

Like the mingling of oil and water, this adding of the conception of revelation to the critical reconstruction only introduces two insoluble elements, multiplying the difficulties without adding to the acceptability of the theory. For such a conception of revelation cannot be brought into any real relation with the Christian doctrine of revelation as it has been held by all churches of the saints. To show this, one incidental reference may suffice, and will be all the better that Professor Smith recurs to it again and again as something on which

he likes to dwell. He sees the Spirit of God breaking out, especially in such utterances of the human spirit as Deborah's song and David's dirge for Jonathan. Where he looks for God is not in any creative act or word, but rising silently and unnoted in a finer ethical spirit than what obtains outside Israel. "These are the two most beautiful anticipations which the Old Testament has to offer of Christ's teaching: But I say, love your enemies," &c.<sup>1</sup>

In comparison with these the Levitical sacrifices are animal and repulsive, and lead to representations of Christ's death, which have the same character. "It is the direst blunder which a preacher may commit to dwell upon them."<sup>2</sup> Two views of revelation lurk in these contrasted statements. If God in very deed, according to the universal Christian belief, have discovered himself in a counsel of mercy, purposing to enter into direct personal fellowship with men, He must appoint the conditions through which we can come to Him. Only He can know all that is necessary that we may live with Him on His plane. He has appointed these in the new covenant; faith in Christ, surrender, the reception of the Spirit, obedience; and only by observance of these conditions can we enter into possession of eternal life.

<sup>1</sup> Professor G. A. Smith's "Modern Criticism," x. p. 257.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 272.

And if, by an act of historical imagination and spiritual sympathy, we transported ourselves into the place of the Hebrews, we should find that, under the unsupportable sense of God's glory in Sinai, they found the precepts of Leviticus most welcome provisions by which, sin taken away, they might come back into fellowship with God. That is no breadth of view which sniffs at what appears the coarser discipline needed in a rude time. If rather, making little of surface appearances, we put ourselves in the place of those multitudes lately redeemed from Egypt, we should see not only the most subtle correspondence in these sacrifices with the sacrifice of Christ, but the profoundest insight into the human spirit, and into the conditions necessary for moral and spiritual emancipation. Granted Sinai and Calvary, these provisions of Leviticus are radiant with the wisdom and glory of God.

In our view, Deborah's song and David's dirge owe their ethical quality to the unique fellowship with God, which in covenant history and sacrifice they enjoyed. But if all that elaborated intercourse of God and man, as represented in the Pentateuch, is an imagination, and God only appears now and again as a finer spirit in the lives of individual men, we are on a totally different level. Save for these gleams brightening toward the prophetic age, there is nothing in Israel's history that was not in Moab,



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Ammon, Egypt, Assyria. Up through the rotting compost of legend and polytheism these ethical gleams arose, related to no authentic word or covenant purpose of God. They are there simply to be discerned by those who see them, to be passed over or misrepresented by those who do not, containing no harmonising view of existence, that, subordinating nature to itself, discovers the full purpose of God.

Now, if this ethical immanence of a spirit which, since it is not of earth, is presumably of God, is the form of Old Testament revelation, may it not also be the true form and quality of that revealed in the Gospel? However individuals may shrink, the principles of the Higher Criticism will not admit evasion of that conclusion. And so you have the full flowering of this movement in the "Encyclopædia Biblica." Jesus Christ is a transitory gleam. In such an article as that of the late Professor Bruce's, we see written out with a sad courage and intellectual honesty the real issues of this movement. The permanent presence of Christ in history is eliminated — His pre-existence, His divinity, His atoning death, resurrection and ascension; and His life is summed up in a piece of plain prose, which to us is the death-knell of the critical movement, and would be, could we for a moment entertain it as true, more crushing than the most awful human calamity.

This is the summary prefacing his article on Jesus: "Jesus Christ, the author and object of the Christian faith, a Jew by race, was born in Palestine, towards the end of the reign of Herod the Great. The home of his childhood was Nazareth, a town in the lower division of the province of Galilee. The family to which he belonged was of humble estate. In early years he worked at a handicraft. On arriving at mature manhood he became a public teacher, rapidly gained fame, gathered about him disciples, offended the ruling classes by free criticism of the prevailing religion, and ended a brief but extraordinary career by suffering crucifixion." And, according to Professor Bruce, that was all!

It is now high time to set forth the clear and inevitable issues. We have used the word "searching" because we believe that this controversy goes to the centre. As has been always the case in great crises, we have many prophesying smooth things, "healing the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly."<sup>1</sup> But we have to look facts in the face. Men may make what private exceptions from their own theory they please, what we have to do with is this view of the formation of Scripture, in its principles and implications. And facing that, we have no scruples in saying that if we accept the conclusions of Criticism then we have no longer

<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah viii. 11.

an authoritative Revelation. Our warrant for going to the whole world and offering pardon and renewal and eternal life on the ground of a Divine covenant promise, foreshadowed in the Old Testament and revealed in the New, is taken away. What remains is to assert, on the strength of our own discernment, that we have the finest ethical efflorescence in the Old Testament Scriptures and in Christ; and make what headway we can. The foundation on which Revelation rests, if Revelation it can now be called, is entirely changed. The Bible is no longer the solitary, immediate unveiling of God, discovering a purpose, founding a kingdom in which humanity should reach its goal, and the meaning and end of all existence should stand clear. Judaism and Christianity have their true place among the ethnic religions, if on that level they are the best.

On the other hand, if we cling to the self-witness of Revelation, and the Protestant doctrine of Scripture, we have against us a vast body of learned opinion, not only without, but within the Church. Now we, whose lives are devoted to practical spiritual work, think far too highly of the debt we owe to experts in criticism and exegesis, to make light of that opposition. Still, that man is a weakling who renounces a deep, abiding, well-authenticated conviction, regarding what touches his inmost self, in external defer-

ence to any array of opinion. And we have seen strange things in our time. Coming back to Tyndall's fiery cloud, we can remember when the great guns of science were thundering on the side of materialism. But what has happened? The men have fallen in their places, the smoke has cleared away, and human personality and the spiritual side of human existence have come out in modern speculation as never perhaps before.

But what if the facts compel us to the critical position? Professor G. Adam Smith says Criticism has won, and we have to discuss the indemnity.<sup>1</sup> As one who stands by Revelation in its completeness, witnessed to in a redeemed experience, we wish popularly, but we trust really and honestly, to investigate the claim in six succeeding chapters. Believe it, that indemnity will never be paid. Proceeding in regular order, before dealing with this hypothesis being thrust upon us, we shall look and see whether something may not still be said for Revelation's self-witness. After a process of disintegration such as no literature has suffered, we shall find that the strength of the traditional view is unbroken, and really heightened by the new light of history and science. Coming to the critical hypothesis we shall then show the class of arguments to which it belongs, what con-

<sup>1</sup> "Modern Criticism," p. 73.

ditions are necessary to its validity, and how far this critical hypothesis meets these. Continuing our criticism, we shall bring out the objections which may be taken to the disintegration of Scripture. In the following chapter, leaving argument in detail, we shall take the Old Testament as it has been reconstructed by Criticism, and show that it is beset by difficulties, does not hang together, lacks all probability as a spiritual whole, is indeed a scheme, artificial in the highest degree, with only one recommendation—that it fits into a naturalistic idea of human development.

But if all this be true, the question arises: How have such mistaken conclusions been arrived at? Our answer is: There have been errors of method. Revelation has rights as a fact in the life of the world which critics have not conceded, and which they must concede. And then, harking back to the second chapter, we wish to show over against the thoroughly lame and halting reconstruction of Criticism the profound harmonies of Old Testament Revelation as it lies before us in Scripture, its historic reasonableness (inspiration assumed), the many considerations making for the authenticity of the Mosaic Revelation, the profound likelihood of the further history, in every phase of reaction, momentary uprising, slow national ascent, on to the kingdom, the temple,

the blossoming of intellectual consciousness, prophecy — the whole discovering a living national growth on the plane of a special revelation of God, whose glory is the sufficient proof of its reality.

## II

### THE UNBROKEN AND GROWING STRENGTH OF THE TRADITIONAL VIEW

John x. 35: "The Scripture cannot be broken."

WE have seen, then, the searching issues of this controversy. What is at stake is the continued recognition of an authoritative revelation. Manifestly that is the issue, frankly and openly raised, between the Church and the acknowledged leaders in criticism. But, as we have seen, it is really not different with those who speak of an element of religion, and even of revelation, still clinging to the disintegrated documents. For revelation stands on such a plane, and enters in such a manner, that, even if we concede the name, the character and authoritative quality are changed.

Now, what does that mean? We have here the profoundest conflict between two lines of evidence—between that inner unity and coherence of revelation, as containing an evolution of the Divine purpose, believed in by the Christians of eighteen centuries; and the modern disintegration, more particularly of the Old Testament, and its reconstruction on critical lines, supported by a vast body



of learned opinion, especially in the last generation. True, these lines of evidence move on different levels—the former appealing to spiritual insight, and demonstrating reality by effects on the thought and life and public action of men; the latter dealing with historical and linguistic tests, according to laws of ordinary probability and common human experience.

Now, the same men are seldom equally strong in both these directions. And so we have a great multitude, secure of their spiritual perceptions, to whom practically the unity of revelation is as axiomatic as the unity of consciousness. And these are unable—we do not say to acquiesce in the results of criticism—but even to understand on what evidence or under what considerations critics have been drawn to their apparently astounding and incredible conclusions.

And not less one-sidedly, critics, immersed in their literary and historical investigations, when they come as now to somewhat generally received conclusions, think, and in effect say, that taking the external history of the Old Testament to be what they have shown, we should without question pay the indemnity. In other words we should tone down our spiritual consciousness—for that is what their request amounts to—divest us of beliefs by which we have been nurtured, and step to the lower level, the vaguer faith, the more uncertain

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hope of a revelation duly sterilised by critical processes, and warranted by critical judgment to be worthy of rational acceptance.

As Protestants we are seeking truth. Our religion can only stand on foundations of truth. But naturally what we on our side start from in entering upon this inquiry is not the unknown, which comes with strange front, but the familiar—this revelation borne witness to in experience, and the outward testimony of tradition on which it has rested. Surely the prudent course is, before we take up with a modern view, conceived by men of alien race, in a far distant century, and especially a hypothetical view founded on an evolutionary theory utterly hostile to Hebrew thought, that we should look and see whether we might not yet stand where the Christian and Jewish generations have stood, and find in tradition sufficient external foundation for a Revelation marked by such internal excellence and coherence of all the parts.

Yet we can fancy an amused smile rising on many faces as they read the title of this our second chapter. For, if significant, the external evidence for the Old Testament is very scant; and what remained seemed to have been broken into fragments by the explosives of criticism. To look abroad upon that fair territory, which appeared a unity amid endless diversity—a great coherent and progressive self-revelation of God—to the genera-

tions of the past, is like gazing upon a town in the Riviera after an earthquake. Where was beauty is desolation. The Pentateuch is disrupted into many fragments, and carried down to late dates. The later histories are treated after similar fashion. The Psalms are dislodged, not only from individual traditional connections, but from the era and the surroundings in which all ancient testimony existent on the subject locates the greater number. Isaiah is broken up into what has been called an anthology of collected prophetic utterances. One walks with uncertainty amid the ruins, doubtful where he may still plant his foot, fearful at what point some new destructive critic may blow him into the air.

And yet we are prepared to say that after this cataclysm the foundations of the traditional view are not overthrown. We may find unbroken and unbreakable pillars on which we may set it up again. Yea, we shall see before we are done that while the stars in their courses have been fighting against the theory which we oppose, from the failures of criticism, from archæology, and from the science of religion, have been coming evidences confirmatory of tradition, some of remarkable pertinence and force. The poetic unity, the informing creative genius of Homer, shone out more vividly in his epics after the disintegrating critical attacks of Wolf and his school. And so to those who do not echo prevailing opinion, but aspire to judge

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for themselves, the Pentateuch seems now instinct with a glory of revelation, a breath of holiness, and (on its unprecedented level) an historical verisimilitude, that speak to every spiritual sense, as being no less really an unveiling of the Divine, than the Acts of the Apostles or the Gospel according to John.

In upholding the validity of tradition, we shall confine ourselves to the Pentateuch. In every sense that is the key of the position. If that can be maintained as a credible and substantially contemporary record of a true revelation of God to Moses, and through Moses to Israel, incorporating the sacred family traditions of earlier revelations; and if, as a consequence, the whole subsequent history is controlled by God's choice of Israel and His revelation to Israel, then all that remains—histories, psalms, prophecies fall into their places according to the traditional view. Whereas, if it could be proved that this Pentateuch now lying in our hands is an imaginative reconstruction of Hebrew history, according to the profounder ideas of the prophets, incorporating, it is true, rude fragments of early tradition, but worked over again and again by late writers trying to glorify their national beginnings, then criticism might fairly claim to have won.

But further, allow us to say that what we are engaged in settling is not a literary question—that

Moses was the author of every word, or almost every word, in these five books. Nor even do we attempt to apply the historical tests which are necessary in regard to later ages, where documentary authorities are abundant. We have not the making of the problems with which we have to deal. All questions of historical origin retreat into mystery, and we must use such means as lie at our disposal, bringing in from every quarter whatever may throw light on the theme. Nor does this history of the chosen people, although informed by a spirit of solitary loftiness and purity, differ in this respect from other histories. But there is another ground that we may take, which involves both the historical character and the Mosaic authorship as subordinate issues, and which has the further advantage of raising the fundamental question by which this whole movement will have to be judged.

Among the higher critics there are great diversities of individual position, many reimporting into their reconstructed Old Testament the greater portion of the existing Scriptures as true for the times to which they refer, others more extreme; some more conscious of an informing presence of God, others tracing to political and such like agencies the peculiar features of the history of Israel. All of these, however, the most conservative as well as the most revolutionary, are committed to this. The Pentateuch in its present

form is not to be taken as a true account of a Divine revelation given to Moses, formally choosing Israel as a peculiar people, investing them with laws for ends of moral and religious discipline, and appointing sacrifices by which they might come from every wandering back into fellowship with God. What is represented as creative, and the beginning of a covenant history in Holy Scripture, was the gathered result and dramatic presentation of a long development, according to the critical hypothesis.

It is this central position, common to all higher critics, which we contest. It is the historical reality of this revelation for which we contend. Indeed, this is what gives us warrant for intervening in this discussion at all. Pardon us repeating this once what in other forms we have already affirmed. From without, by their external tests, the critics are interfering with the unity of a coherent system of thought—and a system of thought on a plane far more commanding than any philosophic system with which it may be compared. They are destroying the record of an advancing Divine purpose, intertwining itself with history, appearing and re-appearing with a Divine originality, but rounding in the completed result to not only a unity of plan, but a glory of self-revelation in Christ which has won the credence and transfigured the character of nearly sixty

generations. And holding with an absolute faith the unity and truth of this coherent system, no wonder if, while loyal to fact and ready to follow whithersoever it leads, we narrowly scrutinise every critical claim.

Come, then, and, laying hold of such facts as critics themselves admit, and passages of Scripture whose evidence cannot be questioned, let us discover what supports we still possess for the traditional view. And as we go forward you will keep in remembrance that if the facts be scant, we are dealing not with speculative reasoning, but with direct testimonies from the history and literature of the chosen people.

It is admitted, then, that the Pentateuch had practically come to exist in the form familiar to us by the time of Ezra, after the Exile. Professor Robertson Smith says: "The Pentateuch, or Torah, as we now have it (for there can be no doubt that the law which was in Ezra's hands was practically identical with our present Hebrew Pentateuch) became the religious and municipal code of Israel."<sup>1</sup> Here, then, our feet are on rock of reality. In 444 B.C., the Pentateuch was in existence, was recognised by the whole nation as the law of God given to Moses, and as such absolutely dominated the national conscience and heart. It is not necessary that we should give

<sup>1</sup> "Old Testament in the Jewish Church," p. 56.



quotations, as the point is not seriously contested, and one has but 'to read Ezra and Nehemiah to convince him of the fact. But, according to the critical view, the Pentateuch then must have been brand new. For if Deuteronomy dated back to Josiah's days, and a fragment incorporated in Exodus, chapters xx.-xxiii., was extant in written form earlier still, the Priests' Code, embracing a large portion of Exodus, and Leviticus, and the greater part of Numbers, had only recently been put together and incorporated with the rest. So late as the Exile the clear light of history is falling around. Have we, then, any hint or suggestion of these recent editings? Not only is there an utter unconsciousness of this process of redaction, but there is a whole set of circumstances which rule the supposition out as utterly incredible.

Do not be led away by words, but pierce to the facts of the situation. It is characteristic of this movement, that we are asked to assent to conclusions which have immense practical consequences, on minute points of scholarship or wide-sweeping inferences from uncertain premises, while the larger considerations of historical probability, the true proportions of cause and effect in the region of the spiritual, and such like, are ignored, if they have not been overlooked. What have they who deal so much in probabilities and presumptions to say to this egregious stumbling-

block for the scientific understanding involved in their theory? A nation like Israel comes out of a term of eclipse in the Exile, with a volume or volumes of laws imbedded in history, for which they have the profoundest reverence as a revelation of God given in the dawn of their history to Moses. These inspire the action of Ezra and Nehemiah, and when publicly read, receive not only universal assent, but stir the profoundest emotions of the whole people.

And yet according to the vaunted wisdom of this latest age, that legislation did not, as they believed, come from God, did not belong as a whole to the Mosaic age. The greater portion was a concoction of the Exile, pieced together from old law and consuetudinary usage, but wrought up, not only with a fertile imagination, but with something approaching conscious fabrication.

To take one instance, there was no tabernacle in the wilderness. Some writer who knew about the temple of Solomon conceived a rude desert prototype of that sanctuary, built and furnished it out of his imagination, and projected the whole as fact into the times of Moses, into the centre of Israel's history, and into the heart of a ceremonial system which, though reported old, was also in form, and largely in substance likewise, fabrication. To add to the utter unlikeli-

hood and topsy-turvyness of this dream, the Priests' Code in large part was a reduction to prose and legislative enactment of Ezekiel's imaginative picture of the temple, which all previous Christian centuries regarded as a prophetic idealisation of the Mosaic ritual, pointing forward to something which may yet be realised in the latter days.

Here, then, is what we are asked to believe, that during the Exile—generally reported a time of depression, though not without great writers like Ezekiel—and while the nation were awakened to profound penitence for their past—there were other writers, who have left no trace, not touched with the national sense of sin, with no very acute feeling of moral realities, who were filled with the desire at any cost to glorify the national beginnings. These unknown writers, as we have seen, did not only not hesitate to fabricate the tabernacle and a complete ritual for the same, but wrought them up with an archaic account of a descent of God upon Sinai, which somehow the Hebrews possessed in the J and E narratives when they were polytheists in religion and had only nature festivals for sacrifices. Dovetailing these utterly incongruous materials, they presumed to put words in His mouth, and to depict thrilling situations in which Moses and the people appeared in soul-subduing relations to Jehovah. And not only did these writers, without name or position,

secure from the people such acceptance as we gladly give to "Ivanhoe" for its vivid imaginative pictures of a far-off time. We are asked to believe that the nation took these audacious imaginings—of which none but the coarsest natures, however clever, could be capable—not only for truth, but for the central reality which lies behind all outward shows of the true, a revelation of God. We are asked to believe that this conviction not only commanded a national devotion to the law unparalleled for persistence and intensity, but kindled a national consciousness in Israel of being the peculiar people of God, on the basis of this Mosaic covenant,—which continues even to this day, after a thousand vicissitudes, to bind the Jews into an indestructible unity, when every bond of land, community of polity, or home tie has been destroyed.

It will take a thousand times the evidence which critics have to bring, and evidence of a different kind from any which they possess, to overcome the extreme unlikelihood of that supposition. Men who live in the open air of reality, grappling with hard, unyielding fact, and understanding the limits of their faculties, will deem it far easier of belief that, as in the New Testament so in the Old, God should have given a true revelation of Himself, starting, from a creative beginning, the national history; than

that a series of occurrences abhorrent to the spiritual judgment, offensive to the moral sense, utterly unauthenticated, and violating every canon of probability, should actually have taken place.

Turn from this distorted dream of a theory which inverts the facts, to the sober simplicity of tradition; and if the facts are few, everything is in keeping with history and satisfying to the spiritual judgment.

There is one fact about the Exile beyond dispute—it must have been a time of the profoundest searching of heart. For the Jews broke definitely with idolatry which, persisted in for many centuries, had wrought their ruin. Now began a passionate devotion to the law and an exclusive worship of God which have not relaxed their hold even to this day. What could have wrought such a change? Where all the great prophets had utterly failed, what secured success? Their casting off as the covenant people of God woke them to covenant position and privilege. As in setting the sun lights the hills above which it rose, they who, with all their sins, were children of the covenant, with pride of their peculiar destiny ingrained in their affections and thought, went back to the glory of their national beginnings. The Kingdom of God has had several such moments of intense consciousness when, athwart the errors and misdirected activity of a thousand years, her members have seen their true ideal and their

grievous sin, and have resolved at all cost to recover their place, enjoy their privileges, and discharge their duties.

Now we put it to the reader to judge whether that is not the case here. All the intervening centuries sink into comparative insignificance, and they are back in the desert with Moses. His name is mentioned oftener in these brief books of Ezra and Nehemiah than in all the prophets. After centuries of chastisement, in which they kept closing their eyes to facts, and going on in their self-willed way, they have come fully to see that the creative beginnings of their nation, and all that was peculiar in their destiny, lay in the Mosaic age. God had spoken to them through His servant, had appointed them ordinances, and entered into covenant with them. The wail of an infinite sadness fills the period. Read the prayer of Nehemiah.<sup>1</sup> All the people wept when they heard the law. Yea, the very fervour of their reverence for a consecrated past, long trampled on, but now reconsecrated in their view, brought a new tone and limitation into their religious spirit, which distinguishes the post-exilic from the pre-exilic ages. They are lovers of the Book, observers of a law, zealots of a system, and not so much worshippers in the liberty of glad fellowship with God as the men of an earlier day.

<sup>1</sup> Nehemiah i.

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But only the profoundest sense of God, once angry but now returning in favour, can explain the extraordinary heights of reverence and submission which they reached. All thought of further developments overborne, they sought with a matchless devotion to become conservers of the past.

Ezra set himself to collect and edit the sacred books containing the law of Jehovah. His highest function was to unfold the teaching of these Divine statutes. The very first task, undertaken amid many difficulties, was to get back into the old covenant relation by setting up the temple worship according to the law of Moses. "And they set the priests in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses, for the service of God, which is at Jerusalem, as it is written in the book of Moses."<sup>1</sup>

But more striking even than that, as a token of measureless devotion, occurred an act to which we have discovered no parallel in history. Only a moiety of the people came back from Babylon. They were in a shrunken state, harassed by enemies. But far more important to them than any material advantage was winning again the favour of God. Consider, they had been seventy years, more or less, in exile. The greater number would be born there. Heathen alliances would have gone on unchecked, when so many of those

<sup>1</sup> Ezra vi. 18.



who returned were found in that condition. Yet at the command of Ezra—a command for which he has often been blamed — priests and levites and people surrendered their strange wives. Read Ezra ix. and x., and if you have an eye for a historic situation you will find yourself face to face with a heartrending fact, which only the profoundest reverence for God's revealed will could bring within a hundred degrees of realisation.

Nor was this absolute submission a momentary phase, but in substance a permanent condition. Twenty years after, on Ezra's return, the people desired to hear the law, to have direct knowledge of the conditions of God's covenant with them; and then the whole nation made a written covenant with God.<sup>1</sup> Century by century this consciousness of being in covenant with God only grew. In virtue of this they came with an ethical witness to that old world. Because of this ethical consciousness, with its vast horizon of spiritual beliefs, the poor crushed Jew, utterly uninteresting in himself, attracted the reverent interest of the Western nations. The Septuagint is a wonderful tribute to the respect which, on account of his religious heritage, the Jew won from the overbearing Greeks.

In the times of Ezra and Nehemiah, then, the Pentateuch was not only existent, but had gathered round it an immense religious reverence, inspired

<sup>1</sup> Nehemiah ix. 38.

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to acts and sacrifices which prove past dispute that these books' had unquestioned claims upon them as revelation. Are we to believe that a shrewd people in such a crisis, when roused to such unheard-of sacrifices, were the dupes of unlicensed imaginations? Ay, and more, are we to believe that, in the case of a nation which had sunk so far, recent fabrications not only imposed on them, but kindled a new constraining consciousness of God, as in covenant relation with them, which impressed heathenism, moulded the thought of succeeding generations in preparation for the Christ, and remains an imperishable possession of the human race?

Though that were the earliest direct reference to the Pentateuch, and though we had to confess that nine hundred years lay between the volume in Ezra's hand and its supposed origin, we should require much stronger evidence than an unproved hypothesis to make away with that proof.

Let us go back now about 180 years to the times of Josiah. Here we have evidence of a very remarkable kind that the book of the law existed. Let us take first what lies on the face of the narrative.<sup>1</sup> The book was in the house of the Lord. In the terrible reaction and degeneracy of Manasseh's reign, and for how long

<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings xxii and xxiii.

before we do not know, it had been lost sight of and forgotten. Josiah the young king is needing all the help he can receive to cleanse the unspeakable pollutions of the land. And man's extremity is God's opportunity. Seeming accidents enter largely into the disposition of human affairs. A sleepless night to Ahasuerus, and a chance reading of his chronicles, changed the whole policy of his empire towards the Jews. And Hilkiyah, stirring about, under the spell of his royal master's intensity, finds amid the archives of the temple the sacred law. That is what the text says—he found. He told Shaphan that he found. Shaphan told the king, who instantly trembled as in the presence of God. Josiah's words are most searching.<sup>1</sup> Evidently all this was new to him. And yet he cannot shake himself free from blame. He should have known. But his fathers were more to blame for entirely overlooking this book. He also, however, is involved in the great wrath of the Lord, for all these are things concerning the people, and they have been neglected and set at nought even to the present moment. While convinced that these are divine testimonies, Josiah is so utterly disconcerted that he would like every confirmation. He sends Hilkiyah and others to Huldah the prophetess, who receives from Jehovah a message, which is a present-day commentary on

<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings xxii. 11-13.

that page of far-off times. God, through His living messenger, confirms His ancient testimonies.

Is there not a remarkable verisimilitude in that story, and do you not find in this the adequate explanation of Josiah's striking, if evanescent, reformation?

For a generation, however, this self-consistent and reasonable account has been overlaid for multitudes of believing men, by a grotesque hypothesis which will, in the end, prove nothing better than a trap to catch unwary critics. They have, with singular agreement, decided that this book of the law contained only Deuteronomy. They find traces of Deuteronomic influence in Jeremiah. But manifestly that is only a proof that Deuteronomy was included, not that Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers were excluded. Then embarking on the sea of pure supposition, the hardier spirits will have it that this book was a concoction of Hilkiah or some others; while the more reverent, to get rid of the questionable semblance of forgery, carry it back to Manasseh's time, and suppose that some unknown person, filled with the thoughts of the great prophets, drew up an ideal picture of the law in the form of orations spoken by the great leader.

We say nothing of the evil seeming inseparable from any form of this theory. Right through, the higher criticism is a science of doubtful expedients. Leaving the safe course of allowing, on the testimony of revelation, the direct presence and order-

ing of God, they are landed in morasses of always dubious, and sometimes as here, let us say, very painful suppositions. Nor can any form of the theory explain the effect from such a cause.

But we go on to affirm that this is a most unfortunate hypothesis. Notice this, that, according to the critics, up to Josiah's days, or a generation before him, the only fragment of written law which existed as we have it was Exodus xx.-xxiii. Deuteronomy comes next. The Priests' Code, containing Leviticus and large portions of Exodus and Numbers, was not put together until long after, in the exile.

Now, with all due respect, this placing of Deuteronomy long before the Priests' Code, looks like building a house down from the chimney. Deuteronomy is in form, scope, and spirit a recapitulation. Like the swell of the ocean after a mighty storm, there are a fervour, an exultation of soul, a consciousness of God, of sublime and solitary relation to God, and of an established covenant with Him, only explicable on the supposition of such an unveiling of God as the earlier books describe. Deuteronomy is great more because of what it points back to than of what it expresses.

It is true that, according to critical opinion, in the Jehovist and Elohist documents, united in J.E. about a century before Amos, there were remarkable traditions of, for instance, the plagues,

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the deliverance from captivity, and the Red Sea crossing, though lacking as yet the elements from the Priests' Code, which invest them with their dignity as a supposed revelation from God and the beginning of a dispensation. But this is just a proof of the hopeless incongruities of the critical analysis. According to the critics, at the time when J.E. was put together, the Jews were polytheists, worshipping Jehovah as the Moabites worshipped Chemosh. Their sacrifices were nature festivals. How could they, upon that level of close proximity to heathenism, have possessed documents breathing so sublime a monotheism? For the call of Moses at the burning bush, and the profound sense of a present God in the plagues, are parts of that tradition. Either the critical analysis is utterly at fault (and they confess its almost hopeless difficulty at this point<sup>1</sup>) or these old traditions must have been wrought up from crude traditions by the later writers of the exile, whose works are gathered up in the Priests' Code. In which case they could not have existed in their present form for the writer of Deuteronomy.

But to remove the last vestige of doubt, note this further fact. The central feature in which Josiah's reformation culminated was a wonderful observance of the Passover. Turn to Deuteronomy xvi. 1 - 8, and can you conceive so con-

<sup>1</sup> See article "Exodus," Dr Hastings' Bible Dictionary, Vol. I. p. 808.

densed and quiet a narrative, if it stood alone, inspiring such an act? Beyond all question Josiah had the complete narrative of God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt before him. His whole being was aflame with the sense of God's power. What might He not do for them? Josiah would revive the great memories of that hour, and in the Pass-over, the original and type of all sacrifice, bring His people under the sheltering blood and into covenant with Himself.

We look upon this incident, then, as another unbroken foundation of the traditional view. It does not formally prove the existence of a completed Pentateuch. But it does prove that there was an ancient record in their archives which conveyed to an estranged generation, with tremendous power, the sense of their being in covenant with, and so under law to, God. The revival was marked by no new forms, but, as in Ezra's day, by stern allegiance in word and deed to an old law. Reforms were carried out in the line of the law. And the central memorial of the old deliverance became the seal of the new reformation. What could the book be but, in substance at least, the Pentateuch? The critical hypothesis then going by the board, in this leading position, the traditional view remains.

Let us travel back another 140 years to the



times of Amos and Hosea, about 750 B.C. Judah and Israel are both standing. The latter is enjoying a period of splendid prosperity under the second Jeroboam. Here we are at the very beginning of written prophecy, looking up the troubled streams of the divided kingdom. According to Professor Smith, as we have just seen, to the very verge of this period the religion of Israel was "polytheism, with an opportunity for monotheism at the heart of it." How can we explain, if that be so, the sublime ethical monotheism of Amos; the tender, holy, brooding love of God in Hosea? That is an insuperable difficulty. But we defer further consideration of this point till we can take the critical reconstruction as a whole, and show its incurable weaknesses, not only at this but many other points.

Note these facts: Both prophets, directly or by implication, refer to Jerusalem as the central seat of worship. Israel is in sin, having broken with this central worship. There was a written law which they had ignored, and the precepts incidentally referred to are not confined to Exodus xx.-xxiii., the earliest fragment, but range over all the codes. The living beginnings of the nation's history are traced back to Egypt, to deliverance from captivity. And most vividly of all do the prophets realise that, in a sense peculiar and exclusive, Israel is the covenant people of God,

From that far-off beginning they have been in that relation under the law of Jehovah; "but they have transgressed My covenant and trespassed against My law." The standpoint of the prophets is the reverse of what modern criticism avers. They do not speak as to a people slowly rising from polytheism to monotheism, but are roused by the spectacle of long-continued national degeneracy from a glorious condition of covenant fellowship with God.

You simply cannot understand prophecy, unless you realise the unspeakable reverence of all the prophets for the entrance of God in promise and condition into the dawn of their history. That gives the note to their unparalleled expostulations, the ethical spirit to their teaching, the pivot from which, leaning on the faithfulness of God, they go out to anticipate coming good. "You only have I known of all the inhabitants of the earth, therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities," said Amos, thrilled with the sense of his people's peculiar destiny. Hosea rises higher, seeing this union of Israel with God in the light of a marriage, the holiest, tenderest, most exacting covenant of earth; and disobedience as whoredom—the bestial violation of a covenant with God as holy, tender, and obligatory as the marriage covenant among men. Think of the prophet himself, with bruised affections, desecrated home, married to a harlot,

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that he might be a living parable to all the people of the dishonour which God suffered at their hands.

How can writings like these be made consistent with the theory of a slow growth upwards on the part of Israel out of conditions hardly discernible from those of the people around?

The point of this evidence is not simply that there were laws, written laws, laws in such number as not to be consonant with the new theory; nor yet that there had been degeneracy instead of progress; but this—even our contention—that there had been a unique creative revelation, ringed round by statute, controlling the whole subsequent history; if only (through their sin) in the direction of affixing a special guiltiness, and bringing down a certain penalty.

And now to bring our long argument to a close. Look back over three great crises in the history of the Hebrews—the age of Ezra, the age of Josiah, the age of Amos and Hosea. Here we are on unquestioned ground of history. What do we find, then, in those three periods, covering more than three hundred years?

We find, beyond question, that this history cannot be brought by any twisting into natural lines. You may, without evidence, turn all the splendour of Exodus into legend. You may spare

no effort to reduce the history to natural measures. But one thing you cannot dissipate from the living consciousness of the Hebrew people: that they stand in a peculiar relation to God—have stood from the beginning, and that everything exceptional in their history owes origin to that fact. That stands, that is justified by all known circumstances. Even though the Pentateuch had been lost we should have had to suppose some such specialty of cause for such an effect. And though we had no further scrap of evidence—and we have much, as we shall afterwards see—no unbiassed literary critic, simply looking at the facts, would hesitate for a moment to take the Pentateuch for what it professes to be—a credible account of the self-revelation of God, and the beginning of the Jewish nation in covenant with Him.

That is what I mean by the unbroken strength of the traditional view. It is unbroken in the main piers of its strength. The considerations which we have advanced are as pillars of Hercules compared with the light and airy structures of hypothesis, which all rest for their validity on a foundation of theory as baseless as themselves.

Take two facts, of great significance, as confirmations of our position. For a hundred years, in ever-increasing numbers, we have had acute experts moving heaven and earth to establish their hypothesis. Yet these two things are true :

Outside their theory—which is on its trial, and cannot yet be taken in evidence—they have not found one objective fact which makes impossible the Mosaic origin of the Pentateuch. Again, outside their theory they have found no scrap of independent testimony to unearth the supposed redactors or compilers of the history, or to prove at any single point that the stages of the critical theory were the real stages at which piece by piece the Pentateuch was built up. “The earth helped the woman”:<sup>1</sup> but facts and time are not on the critics’ side.

Having travelled thus far, however, we wish to bring in certain supports of the traditional theory which come from archæology, from the very failures of criticism, and from the science of religions in its present stage of development. These are of a very remarkable kind, and destined to increase; so that we have the fullest warrant for speaking of the growing strength of the traditional review. Allow us to summarise evidences whose true proportions and value could only be seen if they were stated on a more extensive scale.

Amid the number of small circumstances which have been alleged against the historical character of the Pentateuch, two have seemed to us to be of weight. If a history so wonderful had been handed down for several generations by oral

<sup>1</sup> Revelation xii. 16.

tradition before being committed to writing, it would be difficult to rebut the charge of exaggeration and legend creeping in. Then, also, the argument so strongly put by the late Professor Robertson Smith could not but impress one. If Israel started, as in the Pentateuch, with a recognised ritual system, why does that system remain virtually a dead letter till after the exile?

The former difficulty is now entirely cleared away. The latter, after all, is only a difficulty, as we shall see later, to a poor, external, and far too limited view of Old Testament revelation.

In view of present knowledge, there is no barrier whatever to accepting as historical the statement in Deut. xxxi. 9: "And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it to the priests, the sons of Levi"; nor the actuality of the injunction at verse 11, to "read this law before all Israel in their hearing" at the end of every seven years. Professor Sayce says: "The age of Moses was a literary age, the lands which witnessed the Exodus and the conquest of Canaan were literary lands; and literature had flourished in them for numberless generations before."<sup>1</sup>

Of course we would like to know a great deal more. In what form were these books left, in what language written? Who added the closing chapter of Deuteronomy, and guarded these Scrip-

<sup>1</sup> "Lex Mosaiica," p. 17.

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tures from generation to generation? Not that there is no later reference to them. They were there to be used by Joshua on great occasions. There are numerous quotations from and correspondences with all parts of the Pentateuch in the book which goes by this leader's name. So there is no reason for our ignorance to ferment into suspicion. On many literary and historical questions we have just to take what we can find, and confess our ignorance where great gaps come in.

But there are positive indications which are all in favour of the traditional view. Some critics would disintegrate the Hebrew history utterly. They will not allow the unity of the nation. They suppose that the tribes came swarming over Jordan at several times. Professor George Adam Smith contends for the unity of the nation and the single crossing. But he, in his turn, gratuitously conceives of them as rude tribesmen, who might have remained ignorant of writing, although it was known in all the nations around. Critics are very insensible to the significance of their own admissions. They admit the historical reality of Moses, the captivity in Egypt, the escape, and the fact that Israel received at that time and from that leader religious inspiration, in a vivid conception of God, which made them what they were; but they try to flatten this down to something rude, naturalistic, fragmentary. Their anxiety is



to get the history into line with their view of the development of religions; and they touch the spiritual, the creative element (which they haltingly admit) in a very uncertain way, as if it were an infusion or tincture which they may inject or withdraw at pleasure.

If they admit, however, the least possible idea of Jehovah, they are admitting a new order of thought on a level far removed from all heathen conceptions. As men have tried to imagine a regular advance from the not-living to the living, so some would have us suppose a development from animism to Jehovah; but it is an impious dream. The barriers between the not-living and the living, and between matter and mind, are as nothing, to the infinite gulf between the frog-spawn of heathen imagination and the very earliest dawning of a true thought of God.

Granted, then, such a creative thought, we are bound, in view of all the fresh light thrown upon that far-off age, to conceive the most fitting conditions of its manifestation. That was not a rude time, but an era of great empires, high material civilisation, brisk movement, and vast political complications. But along with this material development there was a singular lack. In one way the age of the second Rameses was like the age of Tiberius: with vast material resources there was an utter bankruptcy of ideals. The earlier

was even more hopelessly empty of every redeeming element than the later age. Sailing up the Nile as far as Assouan, and visiting every famous site, we were oppressed with the blind and blatant egotism written broad in sculpture and inscription. That older world was on the verge of collapse as really as the Roman world of Paul and John.

If, then, as even many critics admit, there did strike in a new transfiguring conception of Jehovah at this time, it is far more reasonable to conceive that that came on the scene and in the manner taught us in the Pentateuch, with commanding power and with a light and warning for Egypt and surrounding nations as well as for Israel. In comparison with the harmony of contemporary fact subsequent tradition and Scripture, supporting the truth of a great creative revelation, the gratuitous assumptions of the critics deserve no credence. But, further, if the narrative of Exodus be restored to our belief, if God broke the power of Egypt, and, setting Israel free by His wonderful might, revealed Himself on Sinai, then, to keep alive these transitory if overwhelming impressions, there must have been a covenant to bind the people to God and a law to enforce that covenant. And so a new probability attaches to the belief that all three codes in their order were very special means devised by Moses, under the guiding of God, to meet a sublime emergency. The idea

that the Pentateuchal legislation consisted of a series of summaries of oral laws drawn up at different dates, but in late ages, is not a success. Wellhausen tried to reconstruct the steps by which such laws grew and accumulated, but his views, which are speculative and naturalistic, have little inherent probability, and have been ably met.

The fact is, there never was such a system of oral law. A critic like Schultz confesses that the laws are a whole. "Everything is of a piece, from the most trifling commandment regarding outward cleanliness up to the fundamental thoughts of the moral law." "The whole is woven into a splendid unity, into the thought that this people should represent the kingdom of God on earth, and realise in its national life the main features of the Divine order of things."<sup>1</sup> And that being so, it is far more reasonable to maintain that that ideal unity was the immediate impress of a Divine revelation, breathing through the whole a Divine spirit, than to suppose it was the result of a concoction, nobody knows when, by nobody knows whom, save that they must have been imaginative artists working on a basis of crude traditional law.

We shall reserve what we intend to say in defence of the Mosaic legislation, as against the argument derived from its alleged inoperativeness, and proceed at once to a positive confirmation of the

<sup>1</sup> "Old Testament Theology," vol. i. p. 138.

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traditional view, the immense importance of which we cannot, perhaps, at once discern.

The Higher Criticism, after sailing the high seas striking terror into peaceful souls, and hesitating not to sink every barque that showed fight with the shafts of contempt and the shot of assertion, is finding herself in troubled waters. She has been sacrificing everything to a so-called science, *i.e.*, to a theory of the growth of religion, thoroughly naturalistic, which presupposed that all religions, Israel's included, passed through certain stages from the lowest forms up through fetishism and animism to the high gods. As men grew up from rude beginnings into tribes and nations, so their ideas of their gods expanded likewise. This theory had never been fully accepted. There were facts which did not fit into the scheme. Still it had the fascination of a seeming natural evolution, and so won a wide popularity. Sober theologians drew pictures of Divine inspiration coming first through myth and legend. Even before, however, the Higher Criticism has disposed her forces and appeared to claim the allegiance of the Churches, she has been deserted by the science for which she has sacrificed so much. At least she cannot allege to-day the support of an undisputed scientific belief.

There is a great array of facts to prove that at one point—and that a fundamental one—anthro-

pologists like Dr Tylor have not gone with the evidence. The progress is *not* one of development from lower to higher. A great number of the most primitive savages retain belief in a Supreme Being, and deathless, immortal Fathers in heaven. "Between them and apotheosised mortal ancestors there is a great gulf fixed—the river of death."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Andrew Lang, whom we have just been quoting, says at page 211 of the same treatise: "It is among the 'lowest savages' that the Supreme Beings are most regarded as eternal, moral (as the morality of the tribe goes, or even on a higher level), powerful." Just, however, because they are good they have been neglected, and a swarm of fetishistic, animistic ideas have taken their place and fill the foreground of their minds. This is proved, not from one tribe but from many, in widely sundered parts of the world. There are traces of high gods among peoples which are utterly undeveloped. These lofty conceptions cannot, according to the naturalistic theory, be owing to advancing civilisation, for they have none. Then there are other tribes in whom the earlier and purer belief is almost swamped in later fetishism, though traces still remain. Indeed missionaries have remarked that in times of great dread the most craven heathen becomes a virtual monotheist.

<sup>1</sup> "Making of Religion," p. 206.

To what does all this point, then, but to a theory widely different from that of our critics and a host of anthropologists in our time? With Von Hartmann, De Rouge Renouf, Lang, and others we come to see that fetishism and animism are processes of decay. In man there is an original, indestructible sense of God. According to Paul's statement, "the invisible things are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made."<sup>1</sup> The traces of a primitive monotheism in China, Egypt, and elsewhere, though they have been made light of by dominant theory, are fact. Myth, legend, fetishism and animism, which have been very rashly regarded as the early soil of revelation, turn out to be early stages of disease and degeneracy, from the clear, if limited, perception of God, with which, according to the evidence of science no less than revelation, man began.

Now all this throws a wonderful light on the problem with which we have to deal. We do not know when we have been more impressed than by reading in Mr Lang's "Myth, Ritual, and Religion," the evidence in detail that right round the world, among civilised peoples like the Greeks and among the rudest tribes, these steps of degeneracy have common characters—here relieved by talent, there darkened by ignorance, but fundamentally similar. There is just one nation among

<sup>1</sup> Rom. i, 20.

all peoples where the well-marked traces of this degeneracy are not to be found. Critics have done all they can to find them there. They have resolved, as we believe, history into myth, to bring Israel into line with the universal tendency; but even with these assertions in their mouths they must confess the profound separation of Israel from all other nations.

What, then, is the irresistible inference but this,—and so the Old Testament is placed on an external pedestal of glory which it never reached before—that while in all other nations this degeneracy went on, in one family God laid an arrest on the downward drift, called Abraham, shielded his descendants, and in due time led them from captivity, under Moses, to be His covenant people, with whom the one hope of man, the seed of salvation for the whole race, was to be found?

In what a commanding position does this view place Israel in relation to the eight hundred millions of heathen still to be brought in. Here in Israel was the dawn of the Kingdom of God, the germ of all to which it has developed. What could make these hopes a living issue amid the degeneracies of animism and the lustfulness of empire but such a wonderful theophany as that of which Scripture speaks? To a primitive people, delivered from the slavery of centuries, what could make appeal, but just such outward manifestations of



favour, accompanied by a moral discipline ringing life round and round ; and a sacrificial system admitting return and restoration to God ? Amid the universal trend downward of the whole world, need we wonder if for long the revelation through Moses was only fragmentarily realised ? One thing is certain : law or no law, sacrifice or no sacrifice, the Mosaic type of belief, elevation of character, and moral submission to God, amid a thousand failures, held their ground in the select spirits of the race. They were not like other men. There were none like them in that ancient world. They were in a sense "all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea."<sup>1</sup> They bear the stamp of a unique destiny, and their perpetual going back to realise a past ideal is proof to us that they had a great creative beginning in their history such as the Pentateuch describes.

Such, briefly considered, is the evidence from ancient record and modern research for the traditional view of the Pentateuch. It may not be so much as we would like, but surely it is sufficient ; and time has been adding to, rather than detracting from, its volume.

There never was a day, then, when there was less need for a violent hypothesis to account for the origin of Scripture. This view harmonises with the faith of Christendom, the internal unity of

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. x. 2.

Holy Scripture, its character as revelation, and its place and influence in the world. We can think but of one objection: it presupposes the supernatural and allows of miracle. We shall now have to look at the critical hypothesis which claims to have ousted this, and in the next two chapters we shall subject it to a necessarily brief, but honest, examination.

### III

#### IS THE CRITICAL HYPOTHESIS VALID? CHRIST AND CRITICISM

John v. 39: "They are they which testify of Me."

WE have seen that not a little can be said for the traditional view on external and critical grounds. Though there are gaps in the evidence, and many questions to which we naturally desire answers that have none forthcoming, yet if we take the trend of historical testimony briefly sketched in the last chapter, and compare that with the unity of thought and purpose pervading the Old Testament, we can have little doubt that the received view of the origin of the Pentateuch is the true one. Indeed, we believe that if there were nothing exceptional in this literature—no miraculous element, no claim to speak in the name of God—the proof would not have been seriously contested.

However that may be, the Church of Christ is face to face with an elaborate hypothesis of the origin of Scripture which not only goes away from, but contradicts tradition. This hypothesis has

been slowly elaborated by many minds, from Astruc and Geddes to our own time ; and, though not without violent transformations, and even boxing the compass of possible solutions, it stands out in certain main outlines to which, with individual differences, the great body of critics give adhesion. This outline we have already stated more than once, and shall have to recall later in this chapter. Our present business, however, is to arrange the method on which we are to proceed. Before we attempt to draw conclusions, let us make sure that we understand the situation. Many things—assertions of critics and the vague terrors of many humble believers—show that an utterly confused and erroneous view of the problem to be solved has taken possession of men's minds.

For instance, it has got into the thoughts not only of laymen, but of a great number of ministers, as it is certainly the opinion of the higher critics themselves, that we can only get rid of the Higher Criticism by positively disproving all their positions, and showing the untenableness of all their disintegrating processes—in a word, driving them off the field. And as we hear voice answering to voice over the immeasurable battlefield, and look at the immense earthworks bristling with every variety of ordnance brought up by learning in defence of the critical position, we might think

the battle as good as lost. There has hardly been such a situation since Rabshakeh expounded the programme of Sennacherib at the gate of Jerusalem. Still, that destroying wave was arrested and broken; and when the whole world wondered to see Jerusalem standing, Isaiah gave the answer: "The Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall trust in it."<sup>1</sup>

The situation is very different from what both friends and foes have believed. The burden of proof rests not with the Church but with criticism. But more than that, the burden of proof is of a very exacting and onerous kind. The Church exists as a fact in this world, living by spiritual energies; and through that life flowing into her from the Unseen has become the mightiest single force in the world. The Scriptures, authenticated as Divine by their results, have been the organ through which God has spoken to successive generations, the instrument by which unnumbered millions have been nurtured in life eternal. And as we have seen, Scripture has a self-witness not only to her unity but as to the steps and order of her own growth. And the Church, which has been the nurse of intellectual freedom, has grown up within the dome of that common consciousness for eighteen hundred years.

To her, however, in these last days there has

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah xiv. 32.

come a challenge. The Higher Criticism has declared that we cannot any longer accept the self-witness of revelation as historically true. Things did not turn out, we are told, as the Bible describes them to have done, but in very different fashion. What answer has the Church been giving to that challenge? The only right one. Standing by Scripture, which she knows to be informed by one spirit, and to contain one ever-growing revelation of God, she is ready for whatever discovery science may bring. Truth is one, and historical fact will never be found to contradict spiritual reality.

The Evangelical Church then says—in counter challenge—What facts have you in support of your assertion? The Higher Criticism answers: We do not rely much on facts. True, there are the evidences of the use of documents in Genesis—a fact which impressed Astruc. There are double accounts of events imbedded in the narratives and expressions, here and there, gathered with great diligence by Dr Robertson Smith, which seem to be out of keeping with the received views of the origin of the books of Scripture. Prompted by these, and such-like difficulties and discoveries, we have, in accordance with the most recent knowledge, drawn up a theory as to how Scripture may be supposed to have taken origin. And it is this theoretical view,

supported by such evidence as we have collected in its favour, which we ask you to accept. In the opinion of some of us this theory destroys the pretensions of the Old Testament to be a revelation, but many of us, though agreeing with the others, can still allow an element of religion, yea, even of revelation, in what remains after criticism has done its work. At least, God's personal presence in Israel seems to Professor George Adam Smith, dispassionately judging, the most natural and scientific explanation.

The challenge of the Higher Criticism therefore comes in the form of a hypothesis or theory, or more plainly still, supposition. Now do not mistake, as if we regarded this to be an objection. Hypothesis is a recognised method of science. As John Stuart Mill says: "It is allowable, useful, and often even necessary to begin by asking ourselves what cause may have produced the effect, in order that we may know in what direction to look out for evidence to determine whether it actually did."<sup>1</sup> Scientific men use hypotheses continually. Oftentimes they could not deal with the simplest facts if they did not begin by conjecturing what may have been the cause, and then see whether their theory fits into the facts. The great astronomer Kepler formed nineteen erroneous hypotheses about the orbit of the planets before he hit on the true view,

<sup>1</sup> "System of Logic," vol. ii. p. 10.



that it was an ellipse. Hypotheses are found in all degrees of strength. Some have risen to the dignity of demonstration, like Newton's theory of the planetary motions. Some are in suspense, with a larger or smaller preponderance of opinion in their favour, like the theories of light. A great many have been thrown aside as void and vain.

This subject of what constitutes a valid hypothesis has been thoroughly discussed by logicians. They have put to themselves the question: When can a hypothesis be fairly regarded as proved? And they have laid down their rules with exactness. Those who wish to see the subject discussed could not do better than turn to the section of Mr Stuart Mill's treatise on logic to which we have referred. There is also a briefer, but illuminative discussion in Lotze's "Logic."<sup>1</sup> Allow us just one remark before stating these conditions. When masters of mental science deal with this subject of hypothesis, they turn their thoughts to natural science, and draw their illustrations from that interesting field. The problems there are simpler, and the laws more exact and obvious. Hypothesis in human affairs has, in comparison, a far narrower range, and has met with more failure than success. Wolf's attempt to disintegrate Homer has not been

<sup>1</sup> Translated by Bosanquet, Clarendon Press.

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sustained. Niebuhr's theory that the old Roman history was derived from popular ballads has been set aside. Baur's tendency theory of a conflict between Petrinism and Paulinism in the primitive Church, with the inferences thence arising as to the origin of Acts and the Epistles, no longer commands belief. In a region so lofty, dealing with a nature so complex as that of man, and endowed with such undefined possibilities, we cannot go very far either in conjecturing an unknown past or forecasting an uncertain future. Disraeli has enshrined human experience in his well-known aphorism: "It is the unexpected that happens."

Turn now to the conditions laid down by logicians which theory or hypothesis must fulfil in order to be valid. "Every hypothesis is meant to be an account of a fact," a statement of "the concrete causes, forces, processes out of which," in this case, the Old Testament arose. Now, manifestly, it must meet all the facts of the case. The critical theory, for instance, must account in every detail for the origin of the Old Testament; and not only how it came to be at all, but how it came to have such a place and hold such an influence. That then is the first rule.

But that is not enough. Suppose, for instance, you were seeking the explanation of some facts

whose cause was unknown, say, for example, the depressing and deleterious quality of the east wind. A scientist might come to you with an alleged cause that seemed to account for every element in the case, and you might just be on the point of saying: Yes, that is the cause, when another comes with a different explanation; and lo! it also accounts for everything. What are you to do in a case of that kind? See which is best supported by observed facts. Indeed a hypothesis—especially when it supposes an unknown cause—cannot be regarded as proved unless it find, in actual reality, independent support of its explanation.

But we have yet to state the highest proof of the truth of a hypothesis. Let us return for an example to Sir Isaac Newton's theory. He sought to account for the planetary motions by the principle of attraction or gravitation. When that law seemed to account for everything, astronomers began to reason from it deductively. They said if gravitation be a reality, it will explain the tides; and it did explain them. When our theory becomes a key, not only to the matter in hand, but to fact after fact hitherto unexplained, then we may be sure that it is a true account of reality.

To many readers we are inclined to offer an apology for lingering so long over what must

appear to them uninteresting matter. Perhaps, however, they will take our word that this labour is essential. Our soldiers in South Africa often spent the whole night dragging their guns with infinite labour into position on some lofty hill. But next day the guns saved the situation. These points which we have been laying down are not our private opinion, but the accepted rules current among thinking men, by which they test all theories on all sorts of subjects which come up for acceptance or rejection. By and by you will see that the whole length and breadth of the critical theory lie exposed to them. You will hear their projectiles singing in the air, and see them falling with destructive force on many a proud structure. And then you will understand why we have chosen this line of battle—because it takes the enemy in front and shatters his main position. There are no movements of the human spirit, however mistaken in the main, that have not been overruled to produce incidental benefits and individual gains. With these we have nothing now to do, but with the critical theory pressing a destructive view of Holy Scripture on the Church, whose overthrow they, if they have any independent value in them, may survive.

It will now be our duty, in this and following chapters, to subject this critical hypothesis to those tests by which Logic affirms that the

validity of every hypothesis must be established. First of all, we are extremely anxious to bring out, even to those least conversant with these subjects, how purely hypothetical this whole critical position is. And for two reasons.

We are struck to find that many critics are anxious to make it appear that they have nothing to do with naturalistic assumptions, but are just Bible students, discovering through their expert knowledge certain results—which it is for them to communicate and for us to receive. To this we answer: Your particular bit of work may be of the simply critical and detailed character you describe, but you follow the lead and take the cue of those who occupy the position we have described, and are working to support their conclusions. A single cog in a wheel has simply to bite at one point into the toothed wheel opposite. In one sense its single duty is accurately to insert itself and hold fast. But the cog is on a wheel, and behind the wheel is an engine, and the whole power of the engine is going through that cog to move the machinery of the mill. And so each private soldier at any part of the immense line of the critical attack must take full responsibility for the movement into which he has volunteered.

But we have a further reason. It is very difficult to get at the real position of great questions by reason of the popular clamour

about them. The vast reading public are ever on the strain for what is new, and when a scholar or a thinker tentatively propounds any theory at all startling or revolutionary, they seize upon this new sensation, assume its truth, discuss its bearings, press its consequences, and cause the world to ring with it, before men competent to discuss the subject have had time to master the facts and look dispassionately on the whole case. More than that, this general impression, creating enthusiasm, arousing resistance, brings a partisan spirit, and many side issues into the controversy, which make it difficult even for competent judges to see the facts as they are.

Of all this we have a remarkable example here. Deferring to great names and professional authority, a vast number have assumed that debate is at an end, and criticism is triumphant. How profoundly illogical even cultivated men may be is seen in this, that they take as proved a mere theory or hypothesis, or supposition, which has not yet been tested. On the other hand, multitudes who deprecate criticism are filled with unnecessary fear. As there are King's Courts to investigate every charge against even the meanest of his subjects, so there are courts of reason which the greatest array of authorities in the world cannot evade.

It is a surprise, even to those who have been

conversant with this speculation for many years, to find on examination nothing but suppositions; and more, how purely gratuitous many of the suppositions are. Let us show this in some detail.

To begin with, it has been supposed that the accounts of the creation and the flood are Babylonish traditions purified, which the children of Israel learned so late as the Exile, and introduced into their Scriptures. Some, however, think that these traditions may have come in through a far earlier contact with Babylon, in the beginning of Israel's history. That is an example of the wide-ranging hypotheses characteristic of criticism.

Again, although in the histories of Egypt and Babylon we find traces of masterful men, brimful of great ideas, and learn that all over the East there were brisk migratory movements toward the West, the Higher Criticism, setting aside the portraits of spiritual heroes like Abraham and Jacob, which impress us as the finest flowering of just such an era, gratuitously imagine another condition of things altogether. They conceive a lower civilisation, a dimmer light, slower movements, a less tense consciousness, which allowed for the growing up of vague mythical elements. They take personal characters which have powerfully impressed subsequent generations to be legendary personifications of tribes—fictitious efforts to account for the geo-



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graphical distribution of neighbouring nations. This again is hypothesis, and hypothesis right in the face of a narrative which in any case is ancient, and embodies a still more ancient tradition, containing, too, an account more in keeping with the newest unfoldings of that far-off time. If Chedorlaomer and the other kings who joined him in the sack of Sodom stand out in solid reality, witnessed to by Scripture and the monuments, surely characters which had in them the saving salt of holiness and moral majesty might also persist.

Coming down to the Mosaic age, we have supposition again—an imaginary picture of a far ruder condition of things than the narrative of Exodus presents. The critics cannot deny a central core of fact. Moses was the true founder of the nation, and the real beginnings of Israel's peculiar career are to be found in his age. You see at bottom they cannot find any explanation but what we find. But, dealing with the fact according to *a priori* ideas of their own, they reduce the story to natural proportions. In a word, they eliminate the Divine creative element out of the books and leave a natural residuum. Allowing for a germinating conception of God coming somehow into Israel, the story as reconstructed by the critics is just a natural story of escape from captivity, desert-wandering, and conquests; and then slow growth upwards from the level of

surrounding heathenism, law accumulating, and sacrifice refining in idea, from age to age. All this is pure supposition, without one vestige of independent proof.

Similarly the account given of the later history, *e.g.*, that Solomon's temple is not an effort to realise the ideal of the central sanctuary sketched in the Pentateuch, but simply a royal high-place, which did not antiquate the other high places, is merely a bow drawn at a venture, with, of course, all sorts of inferential evidence cleverly put together, but with no solid proof.

Coming to the era of the prophets and the later kings, which is the constructive period according to the critical theory, we have a series of unsupported suppositions without a parallel in any literature, or in the history of the world. First we have the fragment of the book of the Covenant<sup>1</sup> incorporated in the Jehovist and Elohist narrative—at any rate, before Hosea and Amos, or it may be a century earlier. Then in Manasseh's or Josiah's days, before 621 B.C., Deuteronomy came into existence; and lastly, some time before the close of the Exile, a large proportion of the present Pentateuch, the Priests' Code, was put together and joined with the other codes into a whole. These are simply suppositions, founded, of course, on a great variety of considerations, but, as we stated in last chapter,

<sup>1</sup> Exodus xx.-xxiii.

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uncountenanced by one shred of fact, and unsupported by independent proof.

Let us pause to take in that circumstance. The critics have lived so long in the world of their own theory, and have made so much of views and considerations that really depend for their validity on that theory, that they take for proof what is really part of their supposition. And they imagine that we are going to accept on trust this huge structure of supposition, not only without evidence, but despite historical improbabilities of the gravest description, as we saw when dealing with the ages of Josiah and Ezra in our last chapter.

But, says someone, granted that this critical theory is not historically proved, that it subsists as a hypothesis, still it is the hypothesis of trained experts, who have a knowledge of the language and a command of the sources given to few. True, they are working with a Hebrew text not older than the eighth or ninth century A.D., and the Septuagint dating from 250 B.C., and downwards. But what triumphs have been achieved by the critical acumen of scholars in other fields! And, especially when we find so many minds agreeing on certain general conclusions, have we not warrant for believing that there must be something in what they aver?

Certainly let us honour authority and acquirements, not as a substitute for proof, but as

predisposing us favourably to consider what they advance as proof. For thirty years we have given such a patient hearing—we mean the Church and Christian people generally—as has never before been given in a similar case. And when still, after thirty years, this hypothesis hangs fire, and actual demonstration is as far off as ever, surely we are not only free, but bound, to inquire into the grounds on which this supposition is set up.

Principal Stewart, of St Andrews, in Dr Hastings' "Bible Dictionary,"<sup>1</sup> concluding strongly for criticism as something which cannot be ignored, says that the problem of the Pentateuch "took a new phase when not only linguistic and literary considerations were brought to its solution, but also considerations derived from a closer examination of Israel's history, and of the progress of its religious thought and practice." When inquired into, that really means that the hypothesis is founded on a hypothesis. For what did this closer examination amount to? Whence this fresh view of the development of religious thought and practice in Israel? Principally from two theories of Wellhausen, adopted by many Continental and British critics; and these in turn were founded on a rigorous application of the theory of natural development.

Take, first, Wellhausen's view of the centralisa-

<sup>1</sup> Vol. i. pp. 289, 290.

tion of worship. This is his strong point, on which he rests his whole theory. There is no element of Divine appointment in the worship of Israel. "In the early days worship arose out of the midst of ordinary life." "A sacrifice was a meal."<sup>1</sup> Even the great national festivals "rest upon agriculture, the basis at once of religion and life."<sup>2</sup> In those days the worship of the Bamoth or high places was the general custom up and down the land. The Israelites learned these feasts from the Canaanites, and reproduced Canaanite customs, substituting Jehovah for Baal. The centralisation of worship was a gradual process. The destruction of Samaria threw Jerusalem into relief as a central sanctuary. As these festivals became centralised under the influence of the prophets, they lost their old associations, and became more and more abstract. "And when they had lost their original contents, and degenerated into mere prescribed religious forms, there was nothing to prevent the refilling of the empty bottles, in any way accordant with the tastes of the period."<sup>3</sup> In other words, imagination set to work, and, on what Wellhausen calls "the *tabula rasa* of the wilderness," reared the hierarchical system depicted in Exodus. The book of the Covenant accordingly belongs to the early period, when nature-worship at the high places still existed. The

<sup>1</sup> "History of Israel," p. 76.

<sup>2</sup> *idem*, p. 96.

<sup>3</sup> *idem*, p. 102.

reform under Josiah, when Deuteronomy appeared, marks the first stage in the spiritualisation of worship; and in the Priests' Code you have the spiritualised worship fitted out with glorious legendary beginnings.

Here you have got one hypothesis supporting another, and both without one vestige of independent proof. If we were entering here in detail into the whole subject, and not furnishing a few proofs of the kind of evidence on which the critical hypothesis rests, we could bring many objections against this theory. As a theory it proves far too much, reducing the history of Israel to such a natural, pagan level that it is impossible to understand how she fulfilled her unique destiny, or rose above the surrounding peoples. Pulverise Old Testament Scripture as you please, it reflects a spirit, and discovers a consciousness of God, and of a national destiny indissolubly associated with God, utterly opposed to this naturalism.

Then, the documents which the theory accounts for do not bear out the view. Of course, it is easy to prove anything when you remove from the text whatever militates against your position! If the Ten Commandments, even in the most primitive form, as some critics think, belong to the book of the Covenant, then they represent so vivid a realisation of one God, and a worship so removed in cardinal features from heathen worship, that we

cannot for a moment regard this section as authorising, or even referring to, the nature-worship of the high places. The very passage which is quoted to justify that worship has indeed the opposite effect: "In all places where I record My name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee."<sup>1</sup> Men were not to worship at their own hand. Jehovah had come into the midst of them. From day to day He would record His name, appoint the place for rest, and there they should worship. And so when they entered into the promised land He would appoint whatever place seemed good to Him for their ordinary or exceptional worship. Whatever that consorts with, such a view is utterly opposed to the naturalistic theory, while it is quite in line with God's appointment of a worship which from the beginning aimed at a central sanctuary. He kept in His own hand the appointment of the place where He should come near and bless them.

What we have to say, however, is that this theory of the centralisation of worship is a hypothesis, possessing no vestige of argumentative value, except as it fits into and explains the origin of Old Testament Scripture. And more, it does not stand alone. There is another explanation which is more than a hypothesis, which has come down from ancient times, which is imbedded

<sup>1</sup> Exodus xx. 24.



in Scripture, and which, without straining our credulity, explains the peculiarity of Israel's worship far more satisfactorily, so as to allow for its unique place and influence. The discovery of God at Sinai was so glorious, that the worship of Israel stood on a plane of its own from the beginning. While the whole nation was in Horeb there could be no question of many altars. And before they left that holy place, provision was made in the tabernacle for a centralised worship, without thought or mention of any other. Only when they were about to enter into Canaan was it necessary, as in Deuteronomy, to enforce the doctrine of the central sanctuary, and so guard them from the heathen worships of the land.

If we simply look at facts as they are before us, which, taking everything into account, is the more likely supposition? Which has the fewer difficulties? And yet the Higher Criticism goes away from the ancient, the obvious, the unforced explanation, and takes up a theory violent, unsupported, improbable.

But take another of these hypothetical supports for the reconstruction of the Higher Criticism. Deuteronomy, we are told, must come before the Priests' Code, because the Levites are predominant in that book, while in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers we have a more highly articulated worship, in which the priests take the principal place.

Here we have a simple process of natural evolution, boldly imposed on Scripture without a vestige of proof. First comes nature-worship, with no definite order; then Levitical guilds, becoming a Levitical order, with special provision; and then the priests and high priest as the last stage in the development. So do men embroider their vain thoughts on the imperishable substance of Scripture!

But the wisdom of man is foolishness with God. He has His own plan written indelibly on Scripture. His plan was not evolution, but differentiation. First the whole people were to be a nation of priests; priestly service was to be the law of their life in response to God's love. Then the first-born sons were specially claimed as the Lord's, and an offering had to be made in lieu of their service. Then the tribe of Levi did service for all their brethren, and had a peculiar provision. And crowning all were the priests, the sons of Aaron. Instead of a poor mechanical idea of natural development, you have a great Divine provision, impressing upon Israel from the beginning the unique character which she bore to the end. The nation was bound to its covenant God in priestly service; every family owned a priestly consecration—that was the essential nature of the kingdom—while Levites and priests were delegated for immediate ministries.

We might now proceed to apply to this hypo-

thesis, based on hypotheses, the scientific tests which we have already mentioned. But, to give the critical theory every advantage, let us look at an argument which has generally been regarded as sufficient to justify the critical view and put the traditional out of account.

If the Pentateuchal system was complete before the conquest of Palestine, how can we explain the fact that it was never fully operative till the Exile? And more than that, "if the whole legal system was revealed to Israel at the very beginning of its national existence," that would cramp further development; or, as Professor Robertson Smith, who elaborately discusses this objection, phrases it, that "strictly limits our conception of the function and significance of subsequent revelation."<sup>1</sup>

There can be no doubt, we think, that that argument has done more than any other to stagger Bible students, and to incline them to believe that there must be something in the Higher Criticism. And yet the objection derives whatever strength it possesses from the same conception of natural evolution which has already been seen to be largely drawn upon, and is pushed home in oblivion of facts of immense significance and importance.

Of course, in the case of tribes growing up in ordinary conditions, institutions are slowly formed,

<sup>1</sup> "Old Testament in the Jewish Church," p. 214.

react on the nation as they take shape, and so reach full development, becoming the mould in which future ages are formed.

But suppose that we have here an entirely different set of circumstances. We saw in the last chapter how, in the ages far removed, of Ezra, Josiah, and Amos, the Jew looked back to a solitary national beginning in covenant with God. Suppose then that God did come forth in glorious self-revelation, bound the people in covenant with Himself, and surrounded them with a law impinging on every side of their individual and common life. That was a movement not on the natural plane of self-interest, but in the region of faith and moral submission. It was of the nature of an appeal to faculties half dormant in the bondsmen of Egypt, asleep in all other nations. If we might speak as men, it was an experiment of a redemptive and educational kind. It was, too, a conditional covenant, based on faith and submission on the part of the people. The rules and penalties were all fixed in view of what was fitting and proportionate, as between a covenant people and their God.

Let faith go, however, let submission be interrupted, and violation of the law would be the first effect among those who had sunk down to the natural level again. The whole system had validity to moral vision illumined by the sense of

God, and to that alone. When the people, then, sank to the level on which we find them at the opening of the book of Judges, need we wonder to find the Levitical system in abeyance? They had forfeited the very conditions amid which it might have been observed. The children of Benjamin might have had Jerusalem in the Conquest, but dwelt with the Jebusites,<sup>1</sup> forfeiting a great opportunity at the dawn of their history.

Then, lest we judge Israel too hardly, let us remember that she stood alone in the earth on this upward groove. All other nations were burying their primitive sense of God in myth, fetishism, and animism. Now this, at least, must be said—and, all things considered, it is a great deal. While there might be wild plunges into idolatry on the part of the chosen people, with the example of a whole world before them, they did not make their bed in idolatry. They clung to rudiments and fragments of the Mosaic system—to sacrifice, to Shiloh-worship, to the ark of the Covenant.

You see, too, from the men and women which the system produced, not only a new sense of God, of His help and scrutiny, but of sin, and of a need of holiness in approaching Him. The fragments—even if all that we read about was

<sup>1</sup> Judges i. 21

all that was, and that is by no means certain—had the soul of the Mosaic system in them, and produced men and women of a type to be found nowhere else in the world.

And when power came to Israel, what do we behold? After centuries we find a recurrence to type—David within his own time, and then Solomon, as an act of homage to God, resolving to rear a temple on the general lines of the tabernacle.

Is not that a living history? Have we not here religion as a vital force, working not mechanically but centrally? And if what we see be only an imperfect aspiration and adumbration, is it not all the more likely to be real, coming from imperfect men?

Compare this pulsating story, with the lights and shadows of a real, if an exceptional life, playing over all, with the machine-made theory of the critics, and you can have little difficulty as to which you should accept.

There is nothing, therefore, which with any approach to truth can be called a necessity for this theory. Come, then, and let us apply the scientific tests which logicians have laid down as the necessary conditions of a valid hypothesis. Can the critical theory meet them? At no single point. As we have seen again and again, it is not consistent with itself. The difficulties which

we pointed out in last chapter are real difficulties. Moreover, how can we have beginnings so crudely naturalistic issuing in a religion so separate from all naturalism as that of the prophets, in vivid contact with God?

But we saw that when we are trying to discover a cause, and especially when there are two or more rival hypotheses set up to explain the phenomenon, it is not enough that any one of them seems to account for all the facts. Real proof must be brought in to bear out the theory. Have we such proof in favour of the critical theory? It is a hypothesis based on hypotheses, and there are really no independent facts to be adduced in support.

But perhaps it is a *tour de force* of genius which gives the most reasonable explanation of Old Testament religion and the formation of the Scriptures. While it does not conform to rule, it may nevertheless hit the nail on the head. Now manifestly it is for the Christian Church, and more widely the Christian people, to speak. The former treasures in her creeds the living findings of all the centuries; the latter are receiving into themselves daily the power of religion, and living by her light. After all, the proper quality of a religion is to be discovered from within by the man who experiences it, and by the generations of men who have written out their experiences in life and literature.



Suppose, then, the Church questioning this new hypothesis: On what ground do you claim that we shall accept this view of the rise and development of Old Testament literature? Not only do you go wide from, but you trample upon, tradition. You have no foundations of fact upon which to base your leading positions. The answer to that question would be: The sovereign worth of this theory is that it reduces the history of Israel to natural proportions, and brings it within the lines of a natural development. The exceptional and miraculous are removed from the history. We look upon the history of Israel as a slow normal growth, not, as tradition regards it, on a plane of its own, moving under the impact of a creative divine revelation, and within the lines of a covenant fellowship.

But, says the Church, speaking in all her creeds, these things are no recommendations to us. And the great mass of living souls in fellowship with God through the Spirit support the testimony of the ages. The spiritual stands on foundations of its own as truly as the material, and is authenticated by results as fully as any kingdom of nature. We need no mediation of human wisdom to shore up and buttress the kingdom of God in the souls of men. She stands in Divine power, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against her. Now the keystone of the spiritual is the direct

self-revelation of God. Thus does it begin in every living soul "When it pleased God to reveal His Son in me," said Paul. "We have heard Him ourselves, and know"—so spake the simple Samaritans from the depths of personal conviction. And more, in every soul this self-discovery of God starts and controls the whole life-progress.

But to advance. We have in Christianity an historical instance of a Divine beginning—a creative revelation in Christ, the sum of which abides in the Gospels and Epistles—that has controlled the Christian centuries, and, exhaustless as at the beginning, has fed and animated and guided the generations of the redeemed to the present hour. What you dismiss as an inadmissible exception is the method of God in the sphere of the spiritual and of revelation. Since the Old Testament is one with the New, an integral part of one great progressive revelation, the presumption is very strong that God would use an analogous method in the Old Testament to what He has done in the New. And on that ground alone the traditional view has immensely the advantage.

That such is the answer of the past—the Christian consciousness of all the ages—there can be no doubt. And while Christ lives and the Spirit works in men, that will continue to be the answer of the generations to come.

And so the disguise is off, and the new criticism

is found to be one with the old rationalism—an attempt to deny, or to limit unwarrantably, the full claim of revelation to be a self-unveiling of God, in a glorious purpose of grace, not subject to nature, but coming in as a higher force into the realm of nature to liberate from slavery, and to throw light upon all subordinate kingdoms of nature, from the standpoint of the spiritual, which is the central truth and reality of the universe.

How do you dispose of an invalid hypothesis? Simply throw it away. Being merely a supposition it is worth nothing, save as it is accepted universally to be the only adequate explanation of the fact being inquired into. But you say: Is all this enormous labour to go for nothing? Being called into existence to support one view of the origin of Scripture, the toilsome researches fall with the hypothesis which they were invoked to maintain. If there are individual results which have any worth independent of the theory, they will assert themselves in due time. But as the labour in making a flying machine converges on its ability to fly, the whole is lost when experience shows it cannot fly. The Ptolemaic theory of astronomy had a great system of epicycles and eccentrics to account for the motions of the planets, supposing the earth to be the centre; but when Copernicus showed the sun to be the centre, all this theoretical structure went by the board.

In our humble judgment there is no evading the conclusion at which we have arrived. This movement has failed, and, having failed, it should be set aside. A hypothesis is a temporary expedient in absence of direct proof, and if, after due investigation, it lack confirmation or be proved invalid, it should decently die.

Before closing this chapter, however, we wish to enforce our conclusion of the inadmissible character of this hypothesis by adducing the testimony of Christ. Surely if anyone has a right to speak of the old Testament Scriptures it is He. He was an ardent student of them. He saw everything pointing forward from the beginning to His own work and sacrifice. Abraham beheld His day. The Scriptures testified of Him. He had weighed every such word as a counsel of God, so that to the men on the way to Emmaus, beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He could point out and interpret the things concerning Himself. Surely all that, added to His Jewish birth and His living on the soil of Palestine while the Jews were a nation, gave Him some advantages for understanding how the Scriptures came to be. He was no traditionalist. He lost His life setting at nought Jewish prejudice and wounding Jewish superstition. With great boldness He discovered the limitations of Old Testament revelation.

And yet criticism has the hardihood—and thereby discovers plainly the direction in which it goes—to rule out the testimony of Christ as of no weight on this subject. There is no vagrant critic, albeit his words show conclusively a flagrant non-receptivity for the spirit of our religion, whose theories, if they have any show of learning with them, are not patiently discussed; but He who saw with unerring eye into the future as into the past, and laid down the lines of a Kingdom which is absorbing all other kingdoms, is set aside! The Lord of glory, entitled to call all men and nations to the obedience of faith, yet He is the inferior of multitudes, who, in far more difficult circumstances, being Gentiles, and removed two thousand years even from the day of Christ, reconstruct the Old Testament with admirable ease, discover the work of different hands in the compass of a single verse, resurrect J. and E. and D. and P<sup>h</sup>. and P<sup>g</sup>.

“And twenty more such names and men as these,  
Which never were, and no man ever saw.”

But others affirm that Jesus accommodated Himself to the men of his own time. They had certain views of the origin and authorship of Scripture, hallowed by tradition, and it was no use, in seeking to confer a spiritual blessing, to rouse their suspicion or awaken their animosity.

To that we could assent if Christ had been

simply silent—avoiding reference to author or age. But, so far from being silent, He is remarkably explicit. He commits Himself to the historicity of Abraham, not only to his personal reality, but to his covenant place. What the Jews read in their synagogues at that day was the Pentateuch as we have it, regarded with a peculiar reverence as the most sacred part of Holy Scripture. When the Law was spoken of, every Jew understood that to be meant; yet Jesus called that Law the Law of Moses.<sup>1</sup> Appealing to the Jews as to their own disloyalty, Jesus said, “Did not Moses give you the law?”<sup>2</sup> He quotes from Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, passages which he calls commandments of Moses.<sup>3</sup> He spoke, too, of the writings of Moses, and declared—yea, made it a part of an argument for His Messiahship—that Moses wrote of him.<sup>4</sup>

Here we have not accommodation but specific assertion of the truth of the traditional view. Not only did Christ not offend Jewish opinion: He had made up His own mind, and expressed His own opinion. And so the prevailing critical view is, that Jesus did not know, being in these matters limited by the knowledge of His time.

Before considering this view, however, we must turn aside to a diversion from the general critical

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxiv. 44.

<sup>2</sup> John vii. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Mark vii. 10; Matthew viii. 4; xix. 7.

<sup>4</sup> John v. 46, 47.

explanation, made by Professor George Adam Smith. He tries to win a dubious advantage by making out Christ to be the first critic. One wonders if he has really broken with the ordinary critical opinion, which insists on the limitations of Christ's human knowledge, or has simply taken up this as an argument fitted to captivate the uncritical lay mind. But, taking the view for what it is worth, his argument recoils with crushing effect on its author. As we have already said, Christ is bold in His exposure of the limitations of Old Testament revelation. He assumes an authority over it, widening the narrow and positive commands of the Old Covenant, and carrying them down to their full meaning and real root in the law of love which He was the first clearly to reveal. But if Christ was a critic—a true critic—when He discovered the deciduous elements, not only in tradition but in the Old Testament, must He not have been equally a critic in His positive view? Christ then, beyond all question, teaches this: that, with whatever temporary accommodations to an infantile stage of moral development, the law contained the norm, the essential principle of the Divine unveiling, having significance, ay, imperishable validity, for all time. With all His pruning, He came not to destroy but to fulfil.<sup>1</sup> Yea, in the very perishable elements there were principles of

<sup>1</sup> Matthew v. 17.



perennial value. Progress was not away from the fullness of the old law, but in the direction of a still fuller interpretation of all which its precepts truly meant. And so He could say: "One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled."

But more than that, Jesus recognised that from the earliest beginnings God foreshadowed the end. In His dealings with Abraham there were great outlines of covenant fellowship and pardon through sacrifice. The patriarch saw in germ all that Christ was to stand for in life and in death. From Moses onwards the Scriptures were full of things concerning Himself. In other words, there was in His view the unity of a great plan pervading Scripture which must have been foreseen from the beginning. He who formed the vital cell must have foreseen all to which that cell could develop. And He who laid down the first lines of promise must have known (so numerous are the correspondences) all into which they would grow in the fulness of time. That is the unforced significance of the conclusions drawn by this "first of critics," the Son of God; and they run directly counter to the fundamental positions of the Higher Criticism.

But the greater number of critics have deemed it safer to take another line. They have held it wrong to consider Christ as a final authority on Old Testament criticism. He everywhere took the Old Testament as He found it, and His beliefs

were the ones current at that time. And Canon Gore (now Bishop of Worcester) instances His use of Jonah's resurrection, and the flood, and His ascription of Psalm cx. to David, as illustrations of the way in which He echoed prevailing opinion. In order to harmonise this with the Church's belief in Christ as the Son of God and Saviour of the world, he and many others bring in the doctrine of the Kenosis—that Christ emptied Himself, coming to be in the likeness of men. To quote Bishop Gore: "He, the very God, habitually spoke in His incarnate life on earth under the limitations of a properly human consciousness."<sup>1</sup>

This introduces a very difficult subject, which we cannot attempt to cover in these few closing words. Of course there must have been a marvellous self-limitation in the Incarnation, before the Divine nature could live and work within the human. But the point is, was there more than self-abnegation; was there a putting away, a privation of an essential attribute of Deity, like omniscience? The proofs on which those who hold this rely do not seem to bear out their contention. Certainly if Christ spoke and thought within a human consciousness, and by means of human words, there was at the same time a wonderful extension of human powers. In numerous minute traits He showed His superiority to ordinary

<sup>1</sup> See Gore's "Bampton Lecture," pp. 195-199.

human limitations. Consider, too, His knowledge of the future. Here the limits which environ us are strait and absolute. He saw the future unerringly. He knew not only the fact, but the entire course of His sufferings, and their issue in resurrection. Then what a limitless insight into the unique character, and course, and world-issues, of His Kingdom! Take those seven parables of the Kingdom narrated by Matthew.<sup>1</sup> Note His clear consciousness of the hostility which He would provoke—sending not peace, but a sword—His vision of evil dogging the good, His perception of the suffering state through which the Church, growing stronger by trial, would enter more fully into liberty and power, His world-commission to His disciples, the assurance of His continual presence with His own. If the whole future of the Kingdom lay clear to Him, surely He must have had exceptional insight into the past of that Kingdom, of which He was sum and goal.

Yet critics deny Him the insight which they arrogate to themselves. In bringing up such minute points as those which we have mentioned, critics are playing with the question. The point is: Did Jesus fundamentally misconceive the character of the Old Testament? Did He take for a creative revelation what was a slow and ordinary human growth? Did He take for prophetic insight

<sup>1</sup> Matthew xiii.

of the patriarch Abraham, words which some imaginative writer put into the mouth of a geographic myth whom he first made a historical character? Did He take, for authoritative laws given by God to Moses, late codifications of Jewish common law wrought up with audacious fictions? Did that idea of a Divine norm in the law which would yet receive an ideal fulfilment, and that other of a Scripture governed in all its parts by a foreseeing mind, and pointing in all parts to Himself—did all that only live as a dream and illusion in His own mind?

If these things were so, if all that is involved in these admissions were true—if we could for a moment believe them true—then what disparagement would fall on the judgment and insight of the Son of God! If He blundered regarding the preparatory dispensation—our pen trembles to write the words—may He not have misjudged regarding the platform on which He Himself stood?

*Until* these matters are cleared, we need not enter into discussion of those points as to the authorship of Psalm cx., and Christ's references to Jonah and the Flood. These questions enter into central matters affecting His own mission, and are testing to moral judgment and intellectual discernment. And when they are fairly faced, the light and easy dismissal of the testimony of Christ will no longer be possible.

## IV

### OBJECTIONS TO THE DISINTEGRATING PROCESS

Matt xxi. 44 : "But on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

•WE reached an important point at the close of last chapter. We saw that the Higher Criticism is a hypothesis based upon hypotheses, without external justification, and in face of other and more reasonable explanations; that it does not at any point meet the tests which logicians have set up to prove the validity of hypotheses; and, therefore, that being only a theory or supposition in absence of direct proof—devised in the hope of its meeting all the facts of the case—and having failed as such, it should be set aside.

But we can fancy the critics putting in a caveat against our dismissal of the case at this point. Tabling Dr Driver's "Introduction to the Old Testament," or the analyses of the books in recent Encyclopædias, or the Polychrome Bible, as far as published, they say: This is our proof; we have disintegrated and reconstructed the Old Testament on critical lines. Professor George Adam Smith speaks of this as "one of the most

thorough intellectual processes of our time." Referring on a previous page to "the industrious research" and "unsparing criticism" brought to bear on the several books of the Old Testament, he goes on to say: "For over a century, every relevant science, every temper of faith, and, one might add, almost every school of philosophy, have shot across this narrow field their opposing lights: under which there has been an expenditure of individual labour and ingenuity greater than has been devoted to any other literature of the ancient world, or to any other period in the history of religion."<sup>1</sup>

We do not wonder that there should be jealousy of the results of such enormous labour. And we hope that we shall never be left to ourselves to speak or write with any other feeling than that of respect for high character, extensive erudition, patient research, and an honest pursuit of truth, whatever our opinion of the results may be. On the other hand, the critics must not for a moment suppose that we are to accept blindly what they give. There is a tone manifest in their references to the common Christian judgment, which, in the interests of truth, not to speak of good feeling, cannot too strongly be reprobated. What the Christian people shall say, what the Christian Churches shall judge, is discounted for them

<sup>1</sup> "Modern Criticism," p. 2.

beforehand, by those whose work has to be pronounced upon, with a scarcely veiled contempt.

In a sentence of his recent volume which is most likely of all to live, Professor G. Adam Smith allows to the Church of Christ with whom abides His Spirit, no liberty of judgment, but only the forced payment of the critically fixed indemnity. Again, when he has eliminated from the history of the patriarchs everything beyond the smallest "substratum of actual personal history," he flouts the conscience of myriads of believing men, to whom such statements raise many difficult questions not easy of solution, with light queries like these: "But who wants to be sure of more? Who needs to be sure of more?" Canon Cheyne, too, is prone to lecture us on what "conservatives want, or ought to want."

In all this, there is a misunderstanding of their position. The critics are the plaintiffs, not the judges; and they must learn to respect the bar at which they plead. Now that their case is drawn up and stated, there is legitimate and large room for full practical consideration, not merely of their theory and its self-consistency, but of how it stands related to ordinary probability, the laws of evidence, and the character of the religion whose origins they would explain.

As litigants call counsel, let us go back to the logicians whom we have employed to state the



conditions of a valid hypothesis. Lotze<sup>1</sup> utters these weighty words: "Every hypothesis is meant to be an account of a fact, and is no mere figure of thought or means of envisaging the object. A person who sets up an hypothesis believes he has extended the series of real facts."

Now what is the position of these higher critics? They have set up a theory, the main outlines of which we gave in last chapter. Denying the self-witness of revelation, that the history of the Jewish people started from a creative beginning which controlled the whole subsequent development, they have reconstructed the history so as to show a slow natural evolution. And now in support of this hypothesis they have broken up Scripture into what they regard as its constituent elements. In the Pentateuch they have relegated their three codes, The Book of the Covenant, Deuteronomy, and the Priests' Code, to what they think their proper places in the history. They have broken up the narrative portions into Jehovist, Elohist, and combinations of these.

All this, in the language of Lotze, however, is a mere figuring of their thought, a means of envisaging or making visible their hypothesis. It so happens that they have been working in an era of antiquity, in which there are few external facts to disturb them, and with the utmost boldness they

<sup>1</sup> "Logic," p. 350.

have disrupted and rearranged Scripture so as to fall in with their view of its origin and development. Not content with one rearrangement they have made changes so sweeping and reversals so violent as to show, that not external facts, but subjective considerations of harmony with their theory have guided them.

Now let no one suppose that in saying this we impute insincerity or a playing with facts to these critics. Holding their theory to be the true explanation of the origin of Scripture, they doubtless hold themselves justified in grouping Scripture in support of their view. As we shall see, there may be in the text some things which give colour to their contentions. Further, we must credit them with the hope, that out of all this disintegration they will evolve a more consistent, truthful and harmonious account of the origin of Scripture.

But does not that make plain to every candid mind that a great work has to be done after the theory has left the critics' hands, before there can be any question of its being received by the Church and formulated in her creeds? Hypothesis is one thing; proven verity is another. And there is often a great gulf between them. No one denies the critics the advantages of their expert knowledge. Even they will be constrained to admit that never before in regard to a controversy so fundamental have the innovators been allowed

so free a hand within the bosom of the Church, and for the most part in places of authority. But while they have—through their life-devotion to this calling—a mastery of the text, of all available facts to illustrate it, and of the endless variety of cultured opinion thereanent, there are many others who have qualifications of various kinds fitting them to make important contributions to a full and fair settlement.

The point for the Church is not, does the hypothesis hang together, but, does it in all parts express the actual, solid, concrete fact? Have we reason to believe that the sacred literature of the Hebrews did grow up in this fashion? Taking human nature as it must have subsisted in all ages, the common human conditions within which men live, the serious problems that face them, and the duties that are thrown upon them, can the supposition be regarded as conclusive which teaches that this literature of the Hebrews, marked by a unique spiritual unity, and an unapproached ethical spirit, is in origin a mosaic of innumerable bits, pieced together by imaginative artists, eager to pass them off for something other than they are?

Now, on this question of fact there are great numbers whose judgment is better worth having than that of the critics—men of science who understand what is meant by a scientific proof,

advocates and judges who have had experience of the difficulties and complications of human testimony, shrewd observers who, in many walks of study and government, of commerce and industry, deal at first hands with facts—the hard realities of physical nature and human nature. These men have come to understand the limits of human faculty, and believing that they are in the midst of a system of things which they only partially understand, they more and more mistrust brilliant theories based on but a section of the facts, and are content to work to a practical solution, not mayhap eliminating every difficulty, or reaching the height of omniscience, but sufficient, and such as all the facts fairly interpreted support.

We wish to show, then, how this analysis of Scripture strikes the average cultured man who, endowed with a disciplined intellect, has been dealing with problems of fact, evidence, and human nature, in some one of the many avenues open to investigation and action.

And, *First*, there is a widespread conviction among cultivated men that in this analysis of Scripture, the critics are, with the materials at their disposal, attempting the impossible.

Let us briefly state their justification for this view. Even when dealing with the work of different hands in a contemporary document, skilled critics have found the task far from easy.

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Who of those who have broken up the Pentateuch into so many documents have attempted to separate Erckmann from Chatrian, or Besant from Rice, in the two series of fiction produced by those literary pairs? This frequently uttered challenge is perfectly fair and to the point.

Then to what extremes have ingenious writers gone in finding strains of one writer in another; discrediting, for instance, Milton, who has taken his place with the immortals, because of his large indebtedness to Du Bartas, ascribing the plays of Shakespeare to Bacon, and so forth. We are here on difficult ground, where learning has often proved mere lumber, where critical faculty has gone astray, and fine literary taste been at fault.

But those natural difficulties are vastly increased when you take into account the exceptional conditions of the Old Testament problem.

We have referred to the materials at the critics' disposal. The pointed Hebrew text in the hands of Hebrew scholars dates back to the eighth century, or thereby, of our era. Earlier than that there are several translations of more or less value; and preceding these the Septuagint, begun in the first half of the third century B.C., and finished probably about 130 B.C. These are the documents. We have also in the book called by his name, some knowledge of Ezra's Pentateuch.

Critics believe that the Samaritan Pentateuch came into possession of that people about the same time. But beyond these we have nothing.

In English literature we have numerous external standards of comparison. The age of Chaucer, "the spacious times of great Elizabeth," the period of Dryden and Pope, and the Victorian era, are all well-defined epochs of literary activity, with marked qualities of their own. So that if any hitherto unknown poem turned up, almost certainly it could be relegated, if not to an individual author, to its own time.

There are, however, no external standards outside the sacred writings by which to judge of their date and authorship. Everywhere is one blank. Here you have the singular phenomenon of a people unmarked otherwise by literary faculty, constructive talent, or creative genius, yea, with significant lacks in their nature in all these directions, producing the most magnificent literary monument of antiquity. We possess this literature in the original language of the people, not as Ezra left it, but as it came from the hands of Jewish scholars far down the Christian centuries. What critics attempt is, disregarding tradition, by such light as they can gather from a text which they believe to have been put together in an utterly unhistorical order, to assign each fragment its place, and to separate parts of one story, and

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even limbs of one sentence, and put between them gulfs of hundreds of years.

That may be all very easy and necessary from the point of view of envisaging the thought of the critics. But when we come to the further point, whether all this is matter of fact, whether this history, which is not only one body but breathes one spirit, is really made up of an elaborate mosaic glued together by imagined history and an afterwards imposed theory; when we ask ourselves whether the critics of this late age have the data for such an analysis, we must be allowed to say that we have the gravest doubt. The very historical vacuum in which the critics have laboured, making it easy for them to analyse Scripture and reconstruct it on the lines of their theory, becomes a profound disadvantage when we come to canvass the matter of fact.

In last chapter we saw that the critical theory is a hypothesis based on hypotheses, and now we see that it is supported by an unchecked hypothetical analysis of Scripture. They do not get down to the bottom of uncontested reality at any one point. And we are not going to take guesses raised to the third power for realities.

But we have not yet seen all the elements of difficulty making, in our judgment, the critical analysis of Scripture an impossible task.

Literary analysis means the delicate operation of



separating the work of two or more writers from the apparent unity of a single treatise. And its weapons are literary—a keen eye for usage, a feeling for style, a delicate perception of those subtle touches of individuality which give flavour and quality to literary composition. Within the most favourable conditions, with many standards of comparison, the process is somewhat uncertain. Critical judgments are proverbially variable. The possession of this gift, too, by no means implies the possession of other gifts—the just appreciation of historical evidence, of the true inwardness of historical periods, and so forth. Yet all these, and much more than these—the possession of virtual omniscience—are calmly assumed in the literary analysis of the Old Testament. And remember this is the critics' sheet-anchor. When, as in last chapter, we pointed out that the conclusions of criticism were a hypothesis based on hypotheses, they speak of this critical analysis of Scripture as the demonstration of its truth.

Turn, then, to the Pentateuch, to which we have been confining ourselves in order to keep our examination within measure. Here we have a work of very various contents, but pervaded by the sense of an all-embracing unity. That sense of oneness commanded the fullest conviction of more than two thousand years. When we examine that unity we find that what links cosmo-

gonies, genealogies, biographies, theophanies, miracles, statutes, ritual, into one whole is, that they all form part of one Divine plan, in the consciousness of one of the greatest men the world has ever seen, Moses. These lived as the constituents of one great movement, in the most regal intellect of the ancient world. He saw them as such, he wrote them out as such. And till Christ came, this story was the most uplifting moral force in the world.

That is a unity of a unique description, very difficult to conceive, even more difficult to sustain, but difficult most of all to regard as merely feigned or imagined. The man who would feign could not touch the heights of moral grandeur, much less create the impression of holiness. The reverent soul, who could enter into such a splendour of conception, and into such a glory of Divine purpose, would never feign.

Remember, too, we are on ground of history. Seti I. and Rameses II., contemporaries of Moses, are as historical as Cromwell or Napoleon. And ages before them we have in Thothmes III. and Queen Hatasu personalities that have left unmistakable mark on the annals of time. It is even part of the critical case that Moses was historical, and that there is bed-rock of fact in the superstructure of this narrative. There is perfect unanimity that the beginnings of Israel lay here.

See the critics setting forth, then, on their work of analysis. At first they began very tentatively. Astruc pointed out, and laid great stress on, the Jehovist and Elohist documents in Genesis. But even those who contend most strictly for the integrity and inspiration of the Pentateuch are not concerned in the slightest degree to maintain that Moses, in relating former unveilings of God down to the last and most complete revelation made to himself, did not use old and to some extent varying traditions, whose joinings are still apparent.

Criticism has now travelled far beyond those tentative beginnings. Not only has it cut up the narrative into sections, but it assigns to each fragment its age. We are not dealing with strictly creative literature, such as poetry or philosophy, in which individual qualities tell, but with plain narrative, artless and unlaboured in structure, reflecting outward events like a pellucid stream. Yet they profess to find not only twin streams of narrative, but junctions and redactions of the same, and large and important additions incorporated in a much later age.

For instance, in the story of the Flood you have passages belonging to J., which is assigned to a comparatively early period of the history, being incorporated with E.; and these, as a joint narrative with the Book of the Covenant, mayhap a century

before the time of Amos. And side by side with these passages you have long sections relegated to the Priests' Code, which was put together late in the Exile. When we ask for the grounds of this literary analysis, they are not forthcoming. We are told that this analysis is one of the most thorough intellectual processes of the age. Modern critics stand upon it, as maintaining and justifying their theory. But very much of it is in the air. We have no independent knowledge of the literary tendencies and attainments of the century preceding Amos, to give us any justification for saying that J. E. is a product of that time. Between that period and the days of Moses we have not an external fact to point out when either stream of tradition, J. or E., might have been composed. And when they dismiss the idea that the Pentateuch was virtually written in the Mosaic age, there is no standard by which to judge how much may have belonged to the original tradition.

When we really try to get to the bottom of this disintegration, we find that the chief divisions in this narrative are not due to literary analysis at all. Some sections of this Flood-narrative display a richer consciousness of God, and a far outlook upon the future. Now that is a marked characteristic of the prophets. Therefore, they reason, these sections belong to the late prophetic age. But that is begging the whole question. How do

they know but that (as Revelation itself declares) an hour of such terror was not a season of Divine opportunity in which God threw light on the far future? They answer: Our theory presupposes a slow, natural development. But this literary analysis was to be the chief support of your theory; yet you are depending on your theory for one main branch of your analysis.

Here you can see at a glance the thoroughly vicious intellectual method of the Higher Criticism. The critics set up a theory of the slow development of Jewish religion. They support that by Wellhausen's hypotheses of the slow growth upwards from nature feasts of the Old Testament sacrifices, and of the gradual development of the priesthood. And then, with much blowing of trumpets, they declare that this theory stands on a literary analysis, which is in part purely speculative, and in large part depends for its conclusions on the theory which it pretends to support. We set out to show good grounds for believing that such an analysis was impossible. We have gone much further, and exposed a spurious method, false to every law of evidence, which deserves reprobation.

*Secondly.* Consider the complex and elusive character of this analysis. Such is our deliberate view of the nature of this disintegration. To put the matter on the lowest ground, we have here no

manner of security that we have got out to the real facts, and to the actual manner in which the Pentateuch was built up. The theory of the critics is envisaged—that is all.

The same conclusion is borne out by another line of remark. Life is an earnest business. Now and again we have instances of human eccentricity, but human life is not spent in making and unraveling puzzles. The exigencies of being keep men close to reality. The law of parsimony holds here. It is quite possible that in the documents of a nation, which had lived to purpose in the world, there might be works of composite authorship. And if analysts succeeded in dissecting them so that they stood out distinct compositions, by internal qualities and marks of time, then we might accept them, all the more readily if their separation made the literature as a whole harmonious. But if separation lead to more separation, if in every separate section men see new sub-divisions, and if even these do not suffice, but we must bring in theories of further editing and misplacing and transposing to account for what we find ; and if, still further, this elaborate analysis in one part produces, not the harmony of the whole, but greater excesses of critical analysis in other parts, what would the average common sense of the world say ? They would declare that the critics were hunting false analogies, misreading the signifi-

cance of apparent resemblances and discrepancies, and had blundered.

That is the precise situation in which we find ourselves here. There is an apparent agreement on certain main narratives—the Jehovist, the Elohist (united into J. E.), the Book of the Covenant, the Deuteronomist, and the Priests' Code. But when we look more narrowly, there is not one of these that is not more or less composite. Take the early narratives J. and E., and according to Professor G. F. Moore, a writer of repute,<sup>1</sup> behind these there was a common stock from which they both drew. Professor Adam Smith thinks these writers are linguistically hardly to be distinguished. Professor Moore marks a difference of individuality and of religious standpoint, which he must have discerned through their words. Then these are united by the redactor, who seems to have used great liberty, sometimes quoting directly, sometimes closely interweaving so as to baffle analysis, sometimes adding matter of his own, harmonising his authors, and emphasising the religious motives of the history. And with the accomplished result in their hand in the Hebrew text of the eighth century A.D., they can separate all these hands, one under another, through all the blurring of one another's work of which these writers were admittedly guilty!

<sup>1</sup> See "Encyclopædia Biblica," pp. 1674-5.



But then in Genesis and Exodus all these were united with the Book of the Covenant and the Priests' Code. The Book of the Covenant is composite; the Priests' Code with which the whole was finally joined in the later centuries of the national history is so composite, that Professor Moore says<sup>1</sup>: "It (the Priests' Code) is rather to be compared to a stratum, the deposit of a considerable period, in which distinct layers are to be seen." To ascertain all this the analysts have just the text to which we have referred. In this way they may make their theory visible to their own minds, but where they are ever to get evidence of its actual reality passes our thought. The very complexity of the analysis lowers the probability, and strengthens the supposition that what they discern are not the sutures or joinings of different documents, but varying phases of a coherent history.

Still we are far from having seen the complexities of this analysis. In a plain narrative of any degree of fulness it would be a comparatively easy thing to separate two stories, each somewhat full, with a certain mental or moral colour of its own. For instance, Mr Froude gives a very full account of the great controversy which arose between Henry VIII. and the Pope and the Emperor about the former's divorce from Queen

<sup>1</sup> "Encyclopædia Biblica," p. 1449.

Catherine. It would not be difficult to piece out of that two narratives—one with an English, the other with a Papal bias—both fairly complete, and each with as good a title to be called a separate document as J. and E. in Exodus.

Where we would expect this analysis to help us would be in the miraculous or supernatural occurrences. If they had been artificially put together—crude elements of fact helped out by audacious fiction—it might have been possible to separate the archaic foundations of the story from the enlarged interpretations of the prophetic spirit. Yet just here they most conclusively fail. In the article "Exodus," in Dr Hastings' "Dictionary of the Bible," we find this statement regarding the Sinai section from cap. xix. to cap. xl.: "It is generally agreed that the sources are much dislocated, and that the material has been repeatedly revised by successive editors and compilers. Most editors abandon the attempt to carry through a systematic analysis or reconstruction. The system adopted here for the J. E. portions is that of Bacon, and its resort to the hypothesis of wholesale transpositions can only be justified by the hopelessness of less drastic methods and the comparative harmony and order which it introduces."<sup>1</sup>

Now, let us pause for a moment and look at the situation. Here is a book—the Pentateuch

<sup>1</sup> Vol. i. pp. 808-9.

—which has come down from a remote past, as an inspired composition, the work of Moses. Josephus<sup>1</sup> says: "It becomes natural to all Jews immediately and from their very birth, to esteem these books to contain divine doctrines, and, if occasion be, willingly to die for them. And of them five belong to Moses, which contain his laws and the traditions of the origin of mankind till his death." The same belief, written broad and deep on the New Testament, has held ground in the Christian Church, almost without debate, until the nineteenth century. During this last period have risen up the critical theory and (whether as cause or effect we shall not inquire) this critical analysis. Both are speculative adventures, to be considered only in so far as they can make their position good. When, then, attempting a task begirt with such enormous difficulties and uncertainties as we have seen, they meet with such indifferent success, hardly to be distinguished from failure, at the testing places, what must be the common-sense judgment of men? Not only have critics not come within sight of any proof on which a Church could take action, but there is a very strong probability that the critics have been mistaken, that any traces of separate documents are very much slighter than the critics have supposed, and that these disintegrating processes are

<sup>1</sup> "Against Apion," i. ch. 8.

carried far in excess of the actual facts of the case.

*Third*, the lack of internal witness to this analysis.—What we mean is that there is not such a commanding number or quality of difficulties in the text as to necessitate this disintegration.

Before dealing with this point, however, we may touch on a difficulty which may have suggested itself to calm and dispassionate minds. They may think that, having respect to the numbers of acknowledged scholars who have been engaged in this analysis, and the acceptance which their work has received, that it argues presumption to express the doubts, and the more than doubts, which we have uttered regarding this analysis. "What," we can fancy someone saying, "do you mean to assert that these fine minds devoted to such studies and with the latest knowledge at command, have made distinctions which had no existence, separated without any justification J. and E., and D. and P.—that these streams of tradition, simpler and more elaborate, more primitive and later, have nothing corresponding to them in the text of the Penta-teuch?"

To this we must answer that no one can doubt the earnest purpose or the intellectual honesty with which this analysis has been carried on. But there is an explanation which at once accounts for those diversities in the narrative which sug-

gested the analysis, and nevertheless points steadily to our conclusions.

The error lies behind the literature, in the fundamental view taken of the history which it narrates. Every great movement which strikes into the centre of human interests starts activities in a vast variety of directions. Take the Reformation, like Mosaism in this, that it sprang from the wing-stroke of a mighty spirit. As historians teach us, that remarkable movement sent a new impulse into every avenue of European life. And so Mosaism was in even grander measure a creative beginning, a birthday of the human spirit, and as such lifted the whole nation to a new plane. Everything had to be arranged from that new covenant centre—laws of civil rule, immediate ordinances of worship, general lines of principle which might later be carried into specific detail; then the elaborate ritual system of approach to God; and then wide outlooks on the future in the spirit of the covenant relation. This central creative influence makes itself felt at all these points, working swiftly and thoroughly under the influence of these Divine energies. History recognises creative, quietly progressive, and reactionary eras. And Scripture teaches that with the Lord—in the Divine administration—one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

The differences in the narratives, which have

been regarded as signs of divergent authorship, are facets or aspects of a many-sided Divine fact, living varieties of view and expression and prevailing interest, as under the power of God this great leader turned from side to side—to the religious or to the civic bearings, to the immediate or remote issues of this Divine revelation. And the divergences in the laws are not the result of wide separation in time, but the natural outcome of the immediate necessities of this creative age in relation to the dispensation which it began. According to this view the Pentateuch is the starting-point of the chosen people, fully equipped in vision of God, statute, and prophetic outlook, for a career in covenant relation with God from generation to generation.

In many other nations, however, the order has been different. Nations like Rome, which have risen to great power, have had small beginnings. And later generations, elated with their supremacy, have been tempted to glorify the crude fact of these beginnings with positive legend and picturesque detail. Where the Higher Critics, in our judgment, have gone astray is, in supposing, against tradition and the strongest internal evidence, that, with whatever differences, Jewish sacred history followed the same course of natural development; and in applying methods, suitable enough in dealing with common human fact and growth of legend,

to a totally different situation, the incoming of a true revelation of God, and its creative influence on the life and institutions of the people. What the critics imagine to be the documents of different authors and successive redactors, imaginatively realising an ideal past, are really the actual many-sided outcome of a wonderful discovery of God to men. This gave them that solitary elevating power which made Jewish history stand alone in the world. While ideal reconstructions, such as the critics suppose, are a form of intellectual amusement to cultivated minds, which have never deceived for long human judgment, or made a single contribution to the moral advance of mankind.

But we must now turn to another point of some importance. After dealing at such length with this literary analysis, one is apt to receive a severe shock in coming across the statement in Professor G. A. Smith's volume,<sup>1</sup> that the criticism of the Old Testament is mainly historical. He still further defines his meaning at page 33, where, after referring to the double accounts of Creation and the Flood, he adds: "It is on the presence of many such doublets in the Hexateuch and historical books that the modern criticism of the Old Testament is based." After studying such books as Driver's "Introduction" and the elaborate

<sup>1</sup> "Modern Criticism, &c., p 46.



articles in the "Dictionary of the Bible" and in the "Encyclopædia Biblica," where, with infinite labour, documents are separated on account of style, spirit, scope, and such like considerations, one marvels at such a statement. Leaving that alone, however, let us look at the facts which are relied on as sufficient to justify the wholesale disintegration of Scripture.

We are expressly told that they are the doublets or double accounts of the same event in Scripture. Let us look at them.

The first is the two accounts in Genesis of the Creation. But it is the very contention of those who uphold the historic unity of the Pentateuch, that in an age of revelation, looking back from the mountain-top of fellowship with God, Moses composed the earlier history, using such traditional accounts, oral and written, as existed, but seeing their divine meaning, and the drift of purpose running through them, in the light of present facts and experiences.

Examine another instance, as proof of the light grounds on which the most sweeping inferences are made to rest, and by which the most revolutionary proposals are justified. Take a well-known double account. In Genesis xxviii. 10-22 we read that, when on his way to Laban, the fugitive Jacob, after the vision of the angels, called the name of the place Bethel; while in Genesis xxxv. 9-15 we

are told that he named it Bethel many years after, when he had returned from his servitude under Laban. Have not those who seriously press this, from Hupfeld downwards, imagination enough to put themselves in Jacob's place? What did the first naming mean? Jacob was a solitary wanderer, coming ere nightfall, leaving on the morrow "with his staff to pass over Jordan." He had no power to fix the name for the community. It was his name, for a sign between God and him, until he should return. When he came back Jacob showed a strong reluctance to return to Bethel until God, by the memory of his former experiences, and using the name which was entwined with these, urged him to return. Then ensued a series of observances which can only be fully understood in the light of the earlier narrative in chapter xxviii. Jacob was now the head of a clan. He said unto his household and all that were with him: "Let us arise, and go up to Bethel." He was going to bring them into the covenant relation in which, hitherto, he had as an individual stood. So, though they would know his story and the name which he had given to the place, he solemnly built an altar and said: This shall now be for my people as for myself, Beth-el, the house of God. Yea, he added another El, El Beth-el, as if to bring in the idea of God, in His house, entering into covenant with them.

And then came the further blessing.<sup>1</sup> In fulfilment of the first promise, made so long ago, God returns and renews the covenant. This was the crowning moment of Jacob's life. The covenant made with Abraham was to stand irreversibly in him. The period of probation was at an end, the period of acceptance as covenant heir had come. With this was entwined the change of name to Israel, first intimated at Peniel. And at the close Jacob repeats the rite with which the covenant was first made, adding a drink offering, and confirming the name in undying association with God's covenant promise. If we are to leave any religious meaning in the narrative at all, there could not be a more consistent or impressive account.

There are several other so-called doublets of less importance even than this, such as the double narratives of the overthrow of Jericho and of the siege of Ai. But we come to one which was dwelt on by the late Professor Robertson Smith, and bulked largely in the beginnings of this controversy in our land. Turn to the wonderful story of David and Goliath in 1 Samuel xvii. The difficulty is David's double appearance at the court of Saul. According to that remarkable scholar the whole matter was susceptible of easy and complete explanation. The Septuagint omits verses 12-31 in chapter xvii., and from the fifty

<sup>1</sup> xxxv. 11-15.

fifth verse on to the fifth verse of next chapter, making the account free from difficulty. In other words, there were two accounts mixed up in our Bibles quite contradictory. According to the one, David was an armour-bearer at the court of Saul, who went out to the conflict with Goliath. According to the other, David had never been at court at all until, a shepherd lad, he was sent with provisions to his brothers, and burst into fame by his offer to fight the Philistine.

Now, if all that had been true, it would have proved a great deal—that there were conflicting narratives of the same incident, and unskilful redaction of these into one. But in the very account of the young unknown shepherd, who had never been at court, there is the express statement that he returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep.<sup>1</sup> And, strangely enough, while the critics cling to the two narratives, they differ widely from Professor Robertson Smith's view. Dr Driver admits that the difficulties are not all removed, and is doubtful whether the Septuagint is to be preferred to the Hebrew; and Wellhausen and Kuenen think that the omissions were consciously made in the Greek to get rid of apparent difficulties.

Such are some of the difficulties which surround what appeared for long one of the plainest instances of different documents with the joinings

<sup>1</sup> Verse 15.

perfectly apparent. After all, the seeming discrepancies are capable of genuine reconciliation. These books are not mere annals of external facts, but histories with the profoundest spiritual side, in which the unchanging laws of fellowship with God are laid bare to a spiritual eye with extraordinary power.

Take the story as it stands, and nothing could be more in keeping. A youth, well grown, on whom the seal of God as future king rested, went as harper to the troubled king. Taken from his sheep, with the litheness of the boy and the great limbs of raw and unformed manhood, he is made a personal attendant on Saul. What a stir the invitation would send into that house! Was not this God's way to fulfil His promise of the crown? So might the father, so might David think. Royal favour is fickle, however, and David returns to his sheep—not the first nor the last to learn in bitter experience that we cannot anticipate what God will do. He has not much pleasure at home. Spiteful at David's choice and promotion to court, his brothers are jealous. They start for the war with Goliath, while David, despite his undoubted prowess, is left out of all.

Nothing truer was ever drawn. No man who has done wonderful things for God ever lacked such bitter disillusion. He must come to lean solely on God. Then, by a simple circumstance

not of his seeking, he is brought at once into the arena of conflict and victory. That has rung true to myriads of heroic lives in all the centuries. As to his not being recognised, he was just at that time of life when young men change most. "Thou art but a youth," said Saul to David before the conflict. He was still in the dawn of manhood, so that on his former residence juvenile traits may have still clung to him. All this, however, is not required. No wonder Saul, distraught and self-absorbed, did not discover, in the man aflame with a great resolve, his submissive boy harper, or the handy armour-bearer. David stood braced up that morning for Jehovah's service. He owed nothing to the king, he owed nothing, but for grudges and ill-will, to his brethren. He had leaned upon God, and by His own wonderful working God brought forth His righteousness as light and His judgment as the noonday. When you have such flawless spiritual coherence, why rob a story of the finest qualities by the very tame method of sawing it in two?

If these, and such as these so-called double accounts are the foundations on which criticism rests, they must be regarded as slender indeed.

And now we must very rapidly summarise our remaining objections. Though very important they are capable of being stated in a few words.

And *Fourth*, as heightening the improbability,

these disintegrations, numerous, complicated, and highly uncertain, lead to further disintegration.

According to confident statements these disintegrations were to work into a complete and highly superior harmony. But, as a matter of fact, disintegration is going from bad to worse. We have had many evidences already how far from completeness, and even from certitude, the analysis is, and we might multiply such confessions.

But there is one recent instance so outstanding that it may serve for proof. Canon Cheyne is generally regarded as one of the foremost British critics, bolder than some, less hampered by fear of consequences, not afraid to follow his arguments to conclusions from which others would stop short, but admired by all and supported in his latest venture, the "Encyclopædia Biblica," by leading representatives of criticism, more conservative and more pronounced.

In that "Encyclopædia Biblica" this brilliant, restless, versatile spirit returns to his oft-trodden subject of Isaiah. And he has produced a document of immense importance in this connection. Granted that he is in advance of the great majority of critics, he shows the unmistakable trend of critical opinions. In that article he institutes a comparison between the earlier and the later schools of criticism, taking Kuenen for his chief exponent



of the former. The difference between the two is that the latter is infinitely more destructive, regardless of tradition, rash in suggestion—reducing Isaiah to a mass of broken fragments. Referring to chapters i.-xxxix., of whose Isaianic authorship in the main most critics were wont to be assured, he says: “It is too bold to maintain that we still have any collection of Isaianic prophecies which in its present form goes back to the period of that prophet.” The second division is also highly composite, containing songs inserted in the prophetic writings, a prophetic imitation of these songs, a large section<sup>1</sup> containing no works of the second Isaiah; the whole being a collection of fragments, edited and re-edited, and not put together till about 250 B.C.; the final redaction which made the entire book one occurring shortly after.

One cannot but remember the strong assertions made in former years, to the effect that if the prophets were made the real beginners of the Jewish religion, and the early history considered, in its present form at least, a late composition under prophetic influence, everything would fall into line. But the actual result is disastrously different, and shows that the critics have been going on wrong lines, and have been dealing with a literature which eludes their analysis, being too vast for their grasp. “Whosoever falls on this

<sup>1</sup> Chaps. lvi.-lxvi.

stone shall be broken, but on whomsoever it shall fall it will grind him to powder."

*Fifth.*—This whole process of analysis lacks external testimony. We have seen in part how the Old Testament has been broken up to envisage or shadow forth the critical theory of the origin of Scripture. Now for all this we have not a vestige of external testimony. All tradition is sternly opposed. One of the insuperable objections which the critics have to get over, and which they have not touched, is to explain how, against all the facts of the case, the impression of unity and the sense of sacred authoritativeness were formed. How did the Jews, shortly after the Pentateuch was put together in the exile, receive it as a revelation from God at the hands of Moses?

Nor have we any independent example of joinings of documents and editings or redactions, such as the critical theory so extensively employs. The only attempt to furnish such independent proof which we have come across was that made by Professor Robertson Smith, through a comparison of the Septuagint and the Hebrew text. He pointed to the fact that the earlier Greek text of the Septuagint was briefer, more concise, wanting many clauses to be found in the Hebrew; and he chose a long section in Jeremiah xxxii. in proof of this. Here, we were told, was the process of

redaction going, on. But in the selected passage we have no junction of documents, but simply a fuller narrative in the Hebrew than in the Greek. Who was more likely to preserve the text with literal accuracy—the Jews, who believed in the writings as a revelation of God, or the Greek translator, who was introducing the Scriptures as literature, not as a revelation, to a strange people? Most naturally would the latter use liberties with his text, omitting and abbreviating the less interesting portions of his original. Speaking of Jeremiah, too, a great scholar, himself a higher critic, affirms that “there can no longer be any doubt that the form of the text yielded by the Greek translator is a mutilated and corrupted one, which arose out of the text preserved to us in the Hebrew, and at a much later time.”<sup>1</sup> And so the last semblance of external testimony goes.

Thus, then, as fairly and candidly as possible, have we put the main facts about this analysis before the jury of average men, who have to ask, not, How does this consort with the theory? but another, and far more important question, Has this any claim to be considered fact? Take this literature of the Old Testament as it lies in our hands, and as it has influenced the Jewish people and all the Christian centuries. Professor Mar-

<sup>1</sup> Graf, quoted in “*Lex Mosaica*,” p. 221, n.

goliouth says: "After having once taken its place at the head of the literature of the world, it has no intention of quitting that post." Consider the matter how you will, we are dealing with a unique fact in the history of the world. As the writer just quoted remarks, the lost literatures which have recently been coming to light "rarely have any value of their own. Egypt and Assyria have produced monuments which were long lost, but now are found and deciphered. Who reads them except out of mere curiosity, or to aid him in some other study? Indian literature is now as easy of access as Greek. But who cares for it?" And yet here we have not a great people like any of those whom we have mentioned, but "a nation which," as one who should know them well says, "of its own self could do nothing for science or philosophy, which could not observe and could not experiment, which could not compile a grammar nor invent a metre";<sup>1</sup> and they produce this literature—a living whole, a supreme literary creation, animated by an ethical spirit and world-view which has moulded, and still moves the world.

How can you explain such a fact? What the greatest and most ingenious nations of the earth in the glory of their power failed to accomplish, how did the Jews achieve? Was it by such a process of inversion as that which the higher

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Margoliouth's "Lines of Defence," pp. 245, 246.

criticism sets forth, by tessellated work of pieced-together prophecies, by crude traditions of history and law, the former wrought up with imaginative details and miraculous accretions; the latter altered, elevated in tone, informed with a prophetic spirit, and projected with the setting of pictorial narrative into a heroic past? By no ingenuity can that be made in the slightest degree likely. Not only is such a supposition in defiance of all natural probability, the moral sense rejects the whole hypothesis as in flagrant violation of the plainest canons of moral judgment by which, even in this imperfect world, action has been guided and opinion has been sustained. The words of Christ cannot be shaken: "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" Could a revelation which has searched generations of men with the fire of God, and has exposed and still exposes every form of unrighteousness, be itself a sham, pervaded by a self-witness which is a lie, built of legend, fancy, tradition, by art and man's device?

The very statement of such suppositions is their overthrow. By no possibility could the critics' theory and analysis be the true explanation. The result could not even be ascribed to the greatest constructive genius. God has lived and moved in this history, as Revelation itself witnesses. God has guided the people in a way which wit of man could not preconceive; and He has animated the

penmen to preserve for all ages in an inspired record the story of what He has done.

That this will be the conclusion of the Church we feel to be as certain as that this frame of things shall come to an end. And so, instead of being reduced to a lower plane, the Bible shall stand forth in more distinctive glory above all other literature, and command a deepened reverence as the inspired record of a Divine purpose. . This book has had a very remarkable history. In the earlier Testament coming down to us from the Jews, and borne witness to as inspired by Christ and His apostles; in the New Testament coming together out of an enormous literature, and establishing a claim to being a Divine Word, by inherent purity, internal harmony, and its flawless appeal to the divine life which Christ had awakened—this Bible has advanced, century by century, to place and influence in individual experience and in the Church. The Spirit of God guiding the Church, according to the promise of Christ, into the truth, has discovered to us afresh, age by age, the value, the resources, the quality of this Divine Word.

One has only to study the history of the Church to find examples of this growing appreciation. When that great Bible student, Origen, was sore pressed by the critics of that early day—Ebionite, Gnostic and Greek,—secure in his perception of

the spiritual unity of the Scripture, he rashly gave up the natural sense of many passages. He confessed that they contained natural and moral impossibilities only to be interpreted in the allegorical sense. Looking back, we can see that there were many explanations, denied to him, which the enlarging experience of after-times would bring with it, and that things which he made difficulties have become glories. Yet if he admits many things—as impossibilities, trivialities, ineptitudes—which we cannot allow, the spiritual worth of Scripture ravished his soul. “The letter is the external garb, often sordid and torn; but the King’s daughter is all glorious within.”<sup>1</sup> Even the great Augustine said that he believed the Bible on the authority of the Church. Magnificently although he entered into and opened out some leading principles, he did not discern the full content of Scripture, nor that divine harmony of revealed truth in which, like a star, or rather a great constellation, she shines above all human authority, incontestably divine.

Then ensued a long period of partial obscurity, when through the activity of reason on the one hand and tradition on the other, the Scriptures for centuries were thrown into the background. The Reformation was one consequence of their rediscovery, and all the currents of influence which

<sup>1</sup> Biggs’ “Christian Platonists of Alexandria,” pp. 137, 138.



made that movement a well-head of new life, not only to the Protestant, but also by reaction to the Catholic nations, and to great new free-born nations that have since sprung into being, flowed from renewed contact of heart and head with the living Word of God. For the first time the Word of God rose to its true place as the supreme standard, the source of public instruction, the cherished treasury of spiritual teaching and inspiration to the great masses of the people. Translated into the languages of the Western European nations, it has now been diffused in hundreds of different tongues and dialects among countless millions all over the earth.

Thus far, however, each new victory, while lifting peoples to a loftier platform of individual and social existence, opened up new avenues of conflict. From subjection to the tyranny of Roman authority, a growing number went to the opposite extreme of liberty. Leaving the standpoint of the Reformation, which was that, quite apart from the authority of the Church, the individual soul had the liberty and the power of coming immediately to God, they construed this into something very different—the right and power of dealing with the problem of existence for themselves. Christianity was regarded as a reproduction of natural religion, and great efforts were put forth to break down miracles and

prophecy as the evidences of a supernatural revelation.

That deistic controversy was silenced by superior argument, and still more by the resurgence of the spiritual as a great vital force. The bloodless reasonings yielded to current facts of renewal, moral transfiguration, spiritual joy. The waves of spiritual revival raising the national temperature, swept the new generation within the spell of wider ethical obligations and worldwide missionary horizons. From another point, however, men returned in the last century to the unsolved problem. Granted that the old deistic position was too narrow, and that the spiritual is a factor in the life of man, may not the whole movement embracing Judaism and Christianity be explained on the lines of natural development?

We have been following in these four chapters, and must still follow in those that remain, the most elaborate effort ever made to eliminate miracle and the direct action of supernatural forces from the Old Testament. The effort has in a sense been well meant, to save the Bible by reducing it in the main within lines of natural evolution. But we have seen how, tried by the average cultured judgment of men, it has broken down. There are no materials in this theory for any consistent view of Scripture, on critical lines,

which a Christian Church could put before her believing people. Yea, it is impossible that they should ever gain a verdict from the common sense of mankind. This Book, which they presumed to disintegrate into innumerable fragments, has broken them. What they have conclusively proved is that, whatever be the truth of the case, they cannot be right. "On whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

Indeed, while the Bible has been suffering such indignities, believing men, convinced beyond all doubt of its indestructible unity and authentic self-witness, have been coming to see that the solution of present difficulties lies in rising to a higher view of it than the Church has ever held. Round the brows of that Old Testament is gathering a new glory, as we behold in the Mosaic revelation the one historical arrest, in a universal human declension from a purer to a more degraded faith—an arrest made by God in one nation and among one people, an arrest by which He lifted them out of their own dreams into a real fellowship with Himself. Thus He started a covenant history, which prepared the way for that fuller revelation by which the whole world shall be brought to Christ's feet.

Anthropology, the science of religion, and whatever we have come to know of the history of primitive peoples, combine to throw that

Mosaic revelation, with the whole subsequent development, into more magnificent relief, into solitary majesty among all the movements of the ancient world. And all these heated controversies will pass, like a morning cloud, as mere human misjudgments of a fact which is Divine!

## V

### THE CRITICAL RECONSTRUCTION OF SCRIPTURE INADEQUATE AND IMPROBABLE

Psa. cxix. 80: "Let my heart be sound in Thy statutes, that I be not ashamed."

WE have given at some length our reasons for dissatisfaction with both the critical hypothesis and the analysis and disintegration of Scripture on which it is professedly based. We now proceed on another line, and complete our demonstration by approaching the subject from another point of view. However they have come, whether legitimately or illegitimately, the critical processes are with us. Here is their reconstructed Old Testament, lucidly presented to us with every advantage of learning and expository talent, and supported by a great array of authorities.

Have we in this critical reconstruction, so novel, so destructive, and in such startling revolt from tradition, an adequate explanation of the origins and development of this great literature?

At this point we must take everything in and about these Scriptures into account, for everything

which has come out of them in respect of spirit and result must have had place in their production

We are face to face, then, with a great and difficult problem. Thank God, we have come out of the Babylonish captivity of Agnosticism. No thinker who would command wide acceptance can afford to treat the spiritual as mere illusion. The reality of the spiritual as a social force, as an element of human experience and a reigning quality of human character, is beyond dispute. Through recent controversies we are rising to a juster conception of the spiritual as an original and distinct—indeed, the supreme—endowment of man. As by the senses we can go out and take cognizance of an external world, so in the spiritual region we can take cognizance of God as Supreme Governor to be obeyed and Father to be loved.

We have thus referred to an unmistakable trend in current thought, because it imposes upon us special obligations.

The great defect of this whole movement consists in this, that it has taken far more account of a so-called natural development than of the distinctive workings of spiritual law, spiritual probabilities, and sequences, and harmonies.

But these cannot be overlooked. The spiritual is a kingdom standing on foundations of fact as much as any other kingdom, supported by dis-

tinctive manifestations and results. As much as the vegetable or animal kingdom, or, to come closer, as much as the physical or intellectual sphere in man, this kingdom or sphere has its own order of facts, its own processes and tests, and reaches out to its own ends; and whatever else a theory of Scripture must meet, since it purports to be a message from God to the spiritual part of man, it must meet these.

The Bible is far more than the greatest literary monument of the ancient world. Not only does it live—in a sense which is true of no other literature—as a moulding force on the institutions of this modern era, not only has it an unexhausted, and apparently imperishable, message for human beings both in public and private relations; it carries with it a more august distinction. Professor G. A. Smith says, regarding the Old Testament: “Above all, He (Christ) fed His own soul with its contents, and in the great crises of His life sustained Himself upon it as upon the living and sovereign Word of God.”<sup>1</sup>

Now since that is so, would it not be unpardonable to investigate the sources of Scripture—whatever attention may be needed for the human side—without reflecting that God must have been at work in these from the beginning; without going further and asking whether we have any

<sup>1</sup> “Modern Criticism, etc.,” p. 11.



other independent evidence as to how God acts in coming into relation with man, and what course His other revelation of Himself has pursued? Yet this necessary department of their critical inquiry our critics have left practically unwrought!

Allow one more preliminary consideration. There is a powerful and persistent tendency among thinkers in all fields, which is a great puzzle to plain people who live close to the facts of life and accept them in their multiplicity, and that is, the tendency to carry back all forms of life and force to one root principle. Now with this we have no quarrel if men keep true to all the facts of experience. We believe that there is one root for all existence—matter, life, mind—in the Will of God. But what we have to point out is, that there is a strong temptation to thinkers to leave out one or more classes of facts, in order to reach all the sooner to their root principle. And so a thousand times the world has heard the shouts of victory over readings of the riddle of existence which in less than a generation became effete.

We have, therefore, to be on our guard, even with the wisest, when they bring some new explanation, which is going to account for everything far more completely than any previous view. Does it account for everything? If it sets some things in fresh light, may not other and more important matters be slurred over? And may not the fresh

light be fragmentary and superficial, springing from comparison of things that differ—merely the movement of the kaleidoscope, not an alteration of the facts?

We have taken occasion to compare the views of many distinguished men on what they claim to have been achieved through this critical reconstruction, and we have been struck, amid all differences of individual view, with the common assumption which underlies them, and the common point of view.

Let us put first the loftiest expression of this claim by a man in the first rank, not of critics, but of theologians, Principal Fairbairn, of Oxford. In his great work, "Christ in Modern Theology,"<sup>1</sup> he says: "Criticism has, by bringing the Sacred Books into relation with sacred history, done something to restore them to their real and living significance. By binding the Book and the people together, and then connecting both with the providential order of the world, it has given us back the idea of God who lives in history through His people, and a people who live for Him through His Word."

Professor Curtis, after mentioning what he regards as the permanent elements of the Old Testament, goes on to affirm that, "Modern criticism has not impaired these permanent elements.

<sup>1</sup> p. 508.

Their authority, which is that of truth, still remains, and the Old Testament has been transmuted from a mechanical record of doctrines, and of forced Divine manifestations, into a book of genuine historical life, an epic of salvation, showing the living process of God's revelation through Israel."<sup>1</sup>

With reference to the results of critical reconstruction, the late Professor Robertson Smith, in the opening lecture of his "Old Testament in the Jewish Church,"<sup>2</sup> says: "The language of these words (of Scripture) is so clear that no readjustment of their historical setting can conceivably change the substance of them. Historical study may throw a new light on the circumstances in which they were first heard or written; but the plain, central, heartfelt truths that speak for themselves, and rest on their own indefeasible worth, will assuredly remain to us. No amount of change in the background of a picture can make white black or black white, though by restoring the right background where it has been destroyed, the harmony and balance of the whole composition may be immeasurably improved."

These are the weightiest statements which we could find in regard to the benefits of this critical reconstruction of Scripture. Yet with all respect for these notable names we have no option but to join issue with them. Indeed, taken together, they

<sup>1</sup> Hastings' "Bible Dictionary," p. 604.

<sup>2</sup> p. 28.

contain among them the chief grounds of our objections.

To begin with the second. Professor Curtis institutes a contrast between "genuine historical life" and "forced Divine manifestations." Evidently, according to him, we can only have history when men are left to develop slowly within natural conditions and by infinitesimal stages, as among other nations.

Here is the naturalistic assumption of which we spoke. To bring in a direct Word and purpose of God, raising the level of the national life and controlling its subsequent movements, is equivalent, in his view, to the destruction of a genuine historical life!

Did he forget, when making such a statement, that we had an example of just such a special spiritually-controlled development? In Christ we have a Divine manifestation which he would be very far from calling "forced"; and associated with this creative revelation of God we have a great sum of doctrine which an unbelieving critic might term, in Professor Curtis's words, "a mechanical record of doctrines." These started a new progress on a loftier spiritual plane. But so far from annihilating "genuine historical life," Christianity is the great creator of history.

These are the words of Professor Flint, quoted from his "Philosophy of History," recast and pub-

lished in 1893; "Christianity by creating the Church enormously enlarged and enriched history. . . . It added immensely to the contents of history, and radically changed men's conception of its nature. It at once caused political history to be seen to be only a part of history, and carried even into the popular mind the conviction—of which hardly a trace is to be found in the classical historian—that all history must move towards some general human end, some Divine goal."<sup>1</sup>

History, then, is not inseparably associated with a natural development, but woke to fulness of life when made conscious of a positive, creative, Divine purpose, working to foreseen ends through all human affairs. We intend devoting a whole chapter—the last—to show that if we accept the self-witness of revelation, and receive the Pentateuch as the genuine account of a true Divine unveiling, we have a history of a most remarkable kind, true to universal spiritual fact and law, discovering, despite all failure and error on the part of man, an education of the human spirit for the full revelation of God which was yet to come. We shall come to regard it as the most remarkable human document, next to that New Testament with which it stands imperishably joined, worthy indeed, because of one informing Divine Spirit, to be called, in Professor Curtis's words, "an epic of

<sup>1</sup> p. 62.

salvation, showing the living process of God's revelation through Israel."

But there is a further criticism, more central and searching. This American writer instances the Old Testament's doctrine of God, its view of man's experiential relation to God, and its being a book of hope, as the three permanent elements of the Old Testament. He adds: "Their authority, which is that of truth, still remains." Yes, they will stand for what they are worth among the spiritual findings of the race. But that was not the authority of Scripture as Jesus, as Paul, as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews conceived it, and as has been held by all the Christian centuries, and is still held in every creed of Christendom. For them, God had revealed a Divine purpose of grace, chosen a peculiar people, for the education of their moral life engirt them with a system of law, and so started a covenant history. Now, on the critical supposition, that does not remain. In other words, what of all is most precious—the character of this book as an authoritative revelation of God, verified in experience and proved in result—disappears. Here is the finished product of nineteenth-century critical science: a reconstructed Old Testament. But whatever virtue may be in the fragments, the breath of creative Divine purpose that made them one—without

any ambiguity, an express revelation from the unseen God—that has vanished!

Now let us return to the remarks of Principal Fairbairn. Despite the tone of finality and all-spanning comprehension in his words, they do not bear very close examination. He says that criticism has brought "the sacred books into relation with sacred history." Evidently, then, they were not in relation before. The sacred books misrepresented the real course of sacred history. But as the only knowledge that Principal Fairbairn, or the critics, can have of the sacred history is derived from the sacred books, we would like to know how they have discovered all this. Manifestly, that can only be from a subjective judgment of what is probable and what improbable, what early and what late. And those judgments must spring from a theory in their own minds regarding human progress—what he calls "the providential order of the world."

Here the self-witness of Revelation, the idea of progress from a Divine creative beginning, is ruled out as absolutely as by the extremest critic; although how this can be done by a Christian theologian who has before his eyes an equivalent fact, in a Christian revelation starting and controlling a Christian era, passes our conception.

But there is room for even more drastic criticism. This judgment on a side issue in his volume



coincides with a main contention in the constructive part, which many of his readers felt to be defective, if not wrong. And it may be interesting to notice in the case of so keen and honest a mind, how a view of doctrine affects our belief in criticism, and our judgment about criticism alters the accents in our theology.

Principal Fairbairn is one of those who would remove redemption from the centre of the evangelical scheme—not, of course, ignoring it, but declining to give it the central and regulative place.<sup>1</sup> The great inspired writer who does unfold the Christian providential order of the world—the apostle Paul—as manifestly, yea, with a force which transcends all comparison, does put redemption in the very core of revelation. Sin has frustrated the Divine purpose in creation, and with ineffable ingenuity and grace, God has, in removing by atonement the barrier of sin, so revealed Himself in His essential attributes of love and holiness, as to reach out in Christ to the triumph and fulfilment of His eternal design. Now such a view of the providential order of the world does demand a specific form of revelation. God must come forth to those who are more or less consciously estranged; He must

<sup>1</sup> "We cannot accept Luther's dictum that justification by faith is the article of a standing or falling Church." "Christ in Modern Theology," p. 650.

appoint the conditions on which He will deal with man. The whole initiative must come from Him, in some purpose of grace furnished from first to last out of the Divine wisdom and love. And human history is the movement forward from the Divine impact, in response, submission, kindling of new aims and activities, new sympathies and aspirations,—in all the efflorescence of ideals and sacrifices which has ever blossomed from human nature fertilised by contact with God.

Such was the form of revelation in the New Testament; such, in the very nature of things (if the Bible view of man be right), must have been its form under the old economy. And just because this notable writer does not allow in his system for the central redemptive note of Scripture, is he led away to another idea of the providential order of the world as that of a normal growth upward, God gradually dawning on the consciousness of men, and what we regard as the Word of God gradually taking shape in human thought in tentative efforts to realise the Divine, in myth, in statute, in imaginative reproductions of crude natural fact, in predictive moral judgment, and so forth.

That is not an alternative view, but, in our judgment, an elimination of the creative element, and a reduction of the Bible from the solitary plane on which it has stood, to proximity with,

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if in acknowledged superiority to, the ethnic scriptures of India and China.

Referring now to the words of Professor Robertson Smith, do we not see beyond dispute that in this Higher Criticism there is more than "adjustment of historic setting"? There is a changed conception of man as the subject of grace, and of God's aim and manner of dealing in revelation. "The plain, central, heartfelt truths" may be there, to stand for what ethical validity may be in them. But where now is the authoritative revelation in which God makes definite promises to men, and pledges His Divine faithfulness to fulfil them?

The critical reconstruction of Scripture, then, is inadequate. Thus pulled down and built up, the Old Testament is a book out of which the very soul of revelation has gone. Surely it is quite too late at the dawn of the twentieth century, after this Book has differentiated itself from all other sacred books, by manifesting the effects and putting forth the power of a Divine revelation; speculatively to assert that all the time the Book has been standing on a far lower level than we believed! Here, indeed, improbability attaches to the new theories rather than to the old beliefs. "For by their fruits ye shall know them."

Having rebutted the claims advanced for this reconstruction, let us now point out directly, that

the reconstruction is inadequate and improbable—first, from the critics' own chosen ground of natural development; and, secondly, from the ground which the Old Testament self-evidently occupies of being a direct revelation.

I. From their own ground of natural development we wish to show that, if all the facts are taken into account, the reconstruction by the critics is inadequate and improbable.

In the opinions we have just quoted, and in the outstanding features of the criticism which in former chapters we described, we have seen that the leading aim of the critics was to bring Bible history into line with what they regard as the natural course of human development. They have throughout paid infinitely more attention to harmony with scientific theories of progress than to congruity with spiritual fact. Yet we are bold to affirm that on their chosen ground they have not succeeded. Their reconstruction is thoroughly out of keeping with facts that are to be found in the history of the nations around. It is not our intention to take sides with either the progression theory or the degeneration theory of human advancement. With the majority of anthropologists the critics assume the former, and for our purpose we are quite prepared to take their ground. The reader will remember how Professor G. A. Smith traced back Israel's beginning to mythical origins in the patri-

archs, and how Wellhausen derived the sacrificial system of Israel from nature festivals. In other words, the Jewish people, in their religion and culture, moved up through the same gradual stages as other nations. Therefore (without any ground of fact, but simply to conform to their theory) the Decalogue, the Levitical legislation, and all the more developed conceptions of Israel's early history, are brought down to late dates.

But all this is done in oblivion of certain uncontested facts, which are quite independent of any theory, and of immense moment. Here we do not refer to the undoubted fact that if there are certain fixed stages of human development, along which all nations progress, they have moved at very unequal rates. Some have remained on the primitive savage level to this hour; others culminated rapidly in early ages and have disappeared, or been stationary since; while all down the centuries we have had blossomings from the barbarian stage into temporary or permanent grades of civilisation. The facts are too various on the arena of human civilisation to admit of the wide and sweeping inferences drawn by the critics.

But we wish to advance to an important point beyond this. Judging simply by the circumstances lying before us in the field of history, and quite apart from any religious theory, we find a whole order of facts pointing to the apparent destination

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of particular peoples to specific place and influence in certain ages of the world. Explain this how we may, the fact is indisputable. The progress of the human race has not been by a certain, even, continuous progression, simultaneous over the whole area, from age to age. . From the dawn of history there have always been typical and representative nations culminating with remarkable celerity into certain forms of civilisation, and stamping their mould on surrounding peoples.

In other words—and we ask the reader to observe the importance of the assertion—among the great nations of antiquity we find, on the natural level, the same law of selection and special blossoming of gift and power, and controlling influence on after ages, which mark Israel in the Mosaic age, on the grander spiritual level. Hence, the course of Israel's history from a creative beginning in the Mosaic age, so far from being in violent opposition to what we find among other nations, is powerfully supported by outstanding—yea, the central and characteristic—facts in the lives of other nations. And, if that be true, the assumption on which the critical movement rests is shaken to its foundations.

Let us turn first to Egypt. Have we in this nation the regulation, slow, development up from savagery?

The oldest civilisation in the world is among

the most developed. Brugsch Bey says<sup>1</sup>: "The scientific students of our day who trace back the history of mankind to the times when the races of men lived in the condition of savages, have arranged in order the three ages of stone, of bronze, of iron, in order to fill up by this regular series the void which exists in all the records of history." "Up to this time, at least, Egypt throws scorn upon these assumed periods." At the earliest dawn of historic time we find a kingdom thoroughly organised for war and peace, furnished with not only the rude necessities but the elegances and luxuries, the pleasures and the pomp of life. From that furthest-off age have come down the most astonishing fruits of the Egyptian genius—the vast design and the astonishing execution of the pyramids. And with that exhibition of unmatched strength you have the striking realism of those works of art which are to be found in the Gizeh Museum, near Cairo, and those most delicate pictures of current life in the morning of the world to be found in the Tomb of Ti.

Now, here we have in the dawn of Egyptian history, what may be truly called its creative age, when all the characteristic qualities which were afterwards to distinguish this nation blossomed out in unrivalled intensity, and with a spontaneousness and grace of movement utterly wanting in later

<sup>1</sup> "The History of Egypt," vol. i. p. 25.



centuries. They never returned to the grandeur and beauty of these earliest attainments. To those who look upon the pyramids, in photographs and paintings, they may seem featureless bulks beside our cathedrals and palaces. But when, standing on the tawny sand under the blue cope of heaven, we look round upon their enormous mass, reducing to nothingness every other monumental work of man, we feel how great in all the attributes of natural energy must that primitive people have been. Adjusted perfectly to the cardinal points, covering thirteen acres, the great pyramid rises to the perpendicular height of 450 feet, and when perfectly covered with mirror-faces of polished granite must have shone in greatly heightened magnificence.

Then, whereas the later art is stiff and formal, laden with religious symbolism, and marked by hardly a trace of human feeling or an illumining touch of genius, in wood-carving, in paintings of animals, in such statues as the Sheikh-el-Beled and the Kneeling Scribe, these early ages show works of art vividly realistic and of imperishable interest.

When we turn to the religious history the reason is apparent. As M. de Rougé says: "More than five thousand years since, in the valley of the Nile, the hymn began to the unity of God and the immortality of the soul. These are the primitive notions enchased like indestructible diamonds in the midst of mythological" additions

which obscured the original worship. Mythology is not seen to be a normal stage of human development, but a disease of thought, which, terribly aggravated by the downward development of art, caused the Power "who was not graven on stone," "whose abode was unknown," to be practically forgotten at the magnificent temples of later dynasties in favour of quite other and lower deities.<sup>1</sup>

Now, if all this be true—and there is no gain-saying it—what are we to conclude about this iron theory of human progression, to which, by the most violent means, the course of Israel's history has been compelled to be conformed?

It is as thoroughly set at nought by the history of Egypt as by the history of Israel. Of course, the history of Egypt, except for the evident tradition of a great God, is on the natural level. Everything was wrought on the natural level, by energy of arm and power of mind and will. But on that level they had an end to serve in the providential order of the world. And so far from growing up through recognisable stages to civilisation, they started with the loftiest conception of God and the grandest liberty of self-expression, stiffening into form and symbol as the centuries went by.

Now if such was the course of things in Egypt—if this, one of the great empires of civilisation,

<sup>1</sup> "Renouf's Hibbert Lectures," pp. 91, 252.

was trained for supremacy and leadership along this line, starting, so far as one can see, with such a magnificence of aim and energy, what improbability can there be, even in view of the general laws of human progress, that Israel, who was reserved for a far grander function, should have had, in the dawn of her history, a creative era, with still more striking features, corresponding to her more remarkable destiny? This iron necessity, therefore, for conforming to natural law—or call it the providential order of the world—which has been lying in the background of the critics' minds through all their destructive work, is a delusion. The same reasoning that sends down to a late age the larger conceptions of the Hebrew spirit would go to prove that the richest outcomes of Egyptian art, and the vastest and most daring architectural achievements, would come last. But facts, in the latter case, show the contrary.

Turn now to another case. We remember how slow, according to the critical theory, must have been the growth of the spiritual. David cannot be credited with any song more developed in this direction than the dirges for Saul and Abner. Still polytheists, we are told, David and his people were far from the full monotheistic stage. This is held to be necessary in the nature of things, because of the average condition of development in that time.

In this the critics contradict ascertained historic fact, and libel human nature. They never seem to take in, that what is beyond question true in later eras may have been true in earlier, that in human nature there were the elements of a violent conflict—possibilities of rising high as well as falling low. What men often sunk to, they without evidence made the normal level at which they stood.

Of the real blunder into which the critics have thus fallen there is forthcoming unmistakable proof. Long before the days of David, in times preceding the age of Moses, a people known as the Accadians lived among the mountains to the east of the Euphrates. They had a gloomy and even terrible religion, and revolting incantations to lay the forces of evil. Some have thought they were Turanians, barbarian outsiders diverse from the Semitic and Western peoples; but others are of opinion that there must have been in them a large infusion of Semitic blood. Indeed, it has been supposed that when Abraham left his country and kindred he came out from this nation.

The remarkable fact regarding this people is, that, at times, elect souls were able to rise above these dark, brooding fears to a vision of a good Being, who, for the moment, fills the soul as alone and supreme. But, more remarkable than this vision of a great, good, holy, tender Being, is the developed character of the worshipper's relation to

Him. There breathes through many a strain an almost Christian sense of sin. There is a closeness of approach, a tenderness of appeal, a warmth of confiding, most touching to behold. Take this address to God:—

“In heaven who is great? Thou alone art great.  
On earth who is great? Thou only.  
When Thy voice soundeth in heaven, the gods fall prostrate.  
When Thy voice soundeth on earth, the spirits kiss the dust.  
O Thou, Thy words who can resist?  
Who can rival them?  
Among the gods, Thy brothers, Thou hast no equal.  
God my Creator, may He stand by my side!  
Keep Thou the door of my lips.  
Guard Thou my hands, O Lord of Light.  
O Lord, who trusteth in Thee do Thou benefit his soul.”<sup>1</sup>

Out in the dark of heathenism, falling prostrate under terrors, these Accadians ever and anon rose to such clear, steady visions of God. In these and similar words we have a “clear and authentic insight into the first manifestation of the religious instinct in man.”<sup>2</sup> “This strange and primitive religion . . . claims with the Egyptian and the Chinese the distinction of being one of the oldest on earth, and in all probability was older than both.”<sup>3</sup>

If in those remote ages of the world, among a people held down by a dark and awful worship of

<sup>1</sup> Ancient Tablet of Babylon quoted in Brace’s “The Unknown God.”

<sup>2</sup> Ragozin’s “Chaldea,” p. 149.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* 180.

spirits, there were such possibilities of ascent, and clear vision, and lofty aspiration, as we have in these records, found at Nineveh, what vestige of validity can be alleged in favour of those reasonings which declare that it is impossible such a psalm as the fifty-first could have been composed by David? Israel holds a place, describe it how you may, separate and distinct from all other nations. The late Bishop Westcott says,<sup>1</sup> "that in no case is the revelation or authoritative rule given in the ethnic books, represented as embodied and wrought out step by step in the life of a people." But in the Old Testament we have alone in the world, the history of a divine purpose wrought out in successive ages, with all the vision and impulse consequent upon such a divine manifestation. Of such a solitary experience we might expect unique outcomes; and we therefore regard as entirely without historical justification the reasoning by which some (not all) relegate the Decalogue to a late age, and count it indisputable, despite the testimony of Jesus, that the 110th Psalm could not have been written by the son of Jesse.

Allow me one further illustration to make evident that the real course of development among the nations of the earth has not been that unbroken, equal progress upward from savagery which theorists depict. Not only in the earliest, but in later

<sup>1</sup> "Cambridge Companion to the Bible," p. 20.

ages we have extraordinary new beginnings of the human spirit, in which the past is left behind, and a people goes forward within new horizons, becomes animated by entirely different conceptions of life and endeavour, and reaches the most perfect expression of its genius in its first literary blossom.

Professor Jebb, in his "Growth and Influence of Classic Greek Poetry," very vividly describes, over against the stereotyped civilisations and fossilised faiths of the East, the entrance of the Greek spirit in Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The literature of Europe begins with them, and in them at a step the Greek tongue finds perfect imaginative expression. Here we observe a type of excellence suddenly emerging, and in its beginnings revealing its regnant qualities and reaching its crown. As we read these poems, breathing the joy of nature, the artist's sense of beauty, the quick objective perception, the singer's mastery of phrase; as we look upon the Greek sculptures, models for all time, and the consummate grace of ornament, for instance, on the shattered structure of the Erechtheion, we become convinced that here again, in the onward course of the nations, was a distinct endowment. There is upon all—epic, statue, architecture, tragedy, philosophy—the hallmark of one characteristic human type, the manifestation of a singular outburst, in many related forms, of human genius. The blossoming was



brief, and the world has been copying the wonders of that creative era ever since.

Suppose the critics were to attempt their cumbersome destructive methods upon Grecian literature and art. Assuming a regular development upward from the savage—although they have here what is not to be found in Israel, a lusty growth of myth and legend—they would have to turn that literature topsy turvey likewise. And when they had done, they would not have been able to account for one characteristic element of Greek civilisation. Here, again, we have, on the broad field of history, providential destination to a particular human service, accompanied by a remarkable endowment, of a nation which rose up in creative energy to run through its day of opportunity in the eye of the world.

The grievous blunder of the critics lay in failing to realise that in connection with Israel we have—whatever more—at least a providential movement of that kind, as in Egypt, as in Greece, owing every characteristic quality to the creative endowment from which the whole started. It was not to be wondered at that in the dark and cloudy day of Deism, Scripture history should have been brought down by every critical art to the level of the common and the unclean; that, later, Wellhausen and Stade should reduce the history of Israel to pure naturalism. But it will never cease

to be matter of wonder that such a number of scholarly men, sensitive to the spiritual, forward to recognise some at least of the higher forces which mould the world, should have failed to allow for these providential destinations of particular nations to some form of light or leading, and frankly to recognise that in this rank Israel was far and away the first. Everything points to such a creative beginning as that which the Pentateuch describes, followed by a history under the spell of that influence. All originalities of architecture and art and literature, typical of the ethnic developments, are nothing to the unapproached originality of the character of Jehovah, and the glory of His revealed purpose.

And yet, under the spell of a passing theory of natural evolution, they turn to the miserable task—doomed to failure from the beginning—of explaining the rise of unspeakably the most original conception of the ancient world, by myth and piecings of old traditions, and imaginative colourings. If we take account of Israel's supreme place and influence, such an idea is utterly inadequate, and, in view of what has taken place among other leading nations on a lower level, is also utterly improbable.

2. But come now to the ground taken by the Old Testament as being a true revelation of God and a preparation for the Christian revelation.

We shall see that in this higher view the critical reconstruction halts at all points. In this connection we have nothing to do with the unbelieving critic, who expressly labours to reduce the history of Israel to a purely natural level. We have no controversy with him since we have no common ground. The actual outcomes in human history of Jewish and Christian revelation are sufficient to convince every open mind that such inquirers have simply left out of account the most characteristic elements of their study.

But this is by no means the position of the great majority of British critics and their supporters. Professor Robertson Smith<sup>1</sup> says: "The Bible does speak to the heart of man in words that can only come from God." Again: "The Bible sets forth the personal converse of God with man. . . . He spake not only through them but to them and in them." And so he contends there is a human as well as a Divine element in Scripture. But he goes on to say:<sup>2</sup> "All that earthly study and research can do for the reader of Scripture is to put him in the position of the man to whose heart God first spoke. It is only the Spirit of God who can make the Word a living word to our hearts, as it was a living word to him who first received it." In a quotation already made, Principal Fairbairn contends that

<sup>1</sup> Old Testament, p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 20.

"criticism has given us back the idea of God, who lives in history through His people, and a people who live for Him through His Word."

We have to do then, admittedly, with a revelation, and an integral part of the revelation of God. But if that be so, why do not these critics accept the self-witness of revelation, and receive the Old Testament supported by the New as it stands?

Professor G. A. Smith<sup>1</sup> alleges the moral difficulties of Scripture as a reason. "The theory of the equal and lasting divinity of the Jewish Scriptures has been fertile in casuistry, bigotry, and cruel oppression of every kind." "The refusal to see any development either from the ethnic religions to the religion of Israel, or any development within the religion of Israel itself . . . has had a disastrous influence upon the religious thought and action of our time."<sup>2</sup>

And Bishop Gore, in his famous contribution to "*Lux Mundi*,"<sup>3</sup> advocating an imperfect tentative revelation (if it can be called such) rising slowly from the pagan level to something better, says: "It is of the essence of the New Testament as the religion of the incarnation to be final and catholic. On the other hand, it is of the essence of the Old Testament to be imperfect, because it

<sup>1</sup> "Modern Criticism," pp. 23-28.

<sup>2</sup> "Modern Criticism," pp. 25, 26.

<sup>3</sup> p. 329.

represents a gradual process of education by which man was lifted out of depths of sin and ignorance." Later on, in the same essay, having allowed for idealising elements, as also primitive myths, he guards us from perilous inferences in these words: "The reason of course is obvious enough, why what can be admitted in the Old Testament, could not without results disastrous to the Christian creed be admitted in the New."

Putting aside, then, the view which the Pentateuch gives of the way in which God discovered Himself to Israel, these believing critics have formed another idea of how God may have come into the life of this people. Without apparently any sense of presumption, as if they were dealing with something well within their powers, they have taken God into their own hands, and have imagined a slow development up from the ethnic level. At every stage they have judged as to what might reasonably be considered possible to God the Revealer and man the subject of revelation. Allowance is made for large infusions of mythical and legendary elements, under cover of which the miraculous may be eliminated, and those darker and cruder elements need trouble us no more. What we have believed to be a divine Revelation, with a history controlled and led on by Him with whom Israel had entered into relation, turns out to be the natural history of the slow

growth of the moral idea in Israel. The higher conception of the divine choice and world-destiny of Israel, was an after-reflection, from the great days of the prophets, when they stood so high in moral respects above the nations of the earth.

As we have hinted, this was a presumptuous and even perilous experiment. We have seen, in referring to the Accadians, how far out the critics were in their judgments of what was possible to men in early times.

But how can we judge as to what may be possible to God? If He has indeed spoken, let us bow. Indeed, in after ages the wonder of wonders regarding this whole movement will be that so many Christian men were implicated in such a speculation. It is against the express testimony of Scripture. It defiantly contradicts the view of the Old Testament taken by the New. It has no analogy in any other field of God's working. It is full of internal incongruities and—perhaps the severest charge which may be made—it alters the very idea and ground of revelation as characteristic of both Testaments.

After what we have said about the self-witness of revelation, and the testimony of Christ to the Old Testament, in the first and third chapters respectively, we are under no necessity of adducing further proof as to the first two points—except, mayhap, to say that the testimony of the Master

is supported throughout the New Testament, especially by Paul. A man of surpassing genius, trained amid the dry-as-dust traditions of the Rabbinical schools, knowing the latter as few have done, he was carried by the power of the Spirit, in the light of fulfilment, into an understanding of the Bible's scope, and every stage of God's advancing purposes. And without a moment's questioning he goes back to the covenant of God with Abraham, and the revelation to Moses, as the pivots of the Old Testament. Conscious purpose on the part of God, made known in the beginning, fulfilled in Christ, animates Scripture from end to end.

In that character Scripture has achieved those wonderful victories which have created Christendom. It does indeed seem strange to be told now that, as regards the Old Testament, these have been achieved under a mistake.

But, further, we have no real analogy in any other field of God's working. Notice, we have here a singular effect not to be found in all the other nations of antiquity—a positive, historical revelation, entering into the life of a nation, and working upward from age to age. To bring this revelation into harmony with heathen religions, to imagine a steady progression from the heathen up to the Jewish level, is to fatally undervalue the fundamental difference between Jewish and heathen conceptions.



We have already traced the historical connection between the critical theory and material evolution. And this vital mistake is analogous to what took place at the borders of dead matter and life. Thorough-paced partisans would have it that life was evolved from dead matter. Processes like crystallisation, discovering the resources of the material, were pointed to as justification of the belief. Clever definitions were drawn up that left out the characteristic elements which had to be explained. At last, however, the unbridged and unbridgable gulf between the living and not-living has been acknowledged. Life is an endowment, and it is "the same from the lowest animal inhabiting a stagnant pool up to the glorious mechanism of the human form."

No one will for a moment deny that the teaching of Jesus, the evangelical scheme of Paul, the revelation of Calvary, stand at an infinite remove from all the imaginations of heathenism. Every one who has any title to the name Christian will admit that they are revelations from God. But we assert that in essence the characteristic quality in those fully developed revelations, which marks them as from God, is to be found in the promises of God to Abraham and in the calling of Moses. Like the barrier between the living and the not-living, yea, broader far, is the barrier between these counsels of eternity and the yearn-

ings and vaticinations of the heathen human heart. As life has its own laws different from those of the not-living, the analogies of heathen religions do not obtain here. We are driven forward to the only real analogy in the Christian religion; and are led to ask this question: How did God proceed in revealing Himself through Christ? Because, whatever the differences between temporary and final, early and late, the provisional and the complete, there must be some fundamental correspondence in His methods.

But further, this critical reconstruction is full of internal incongruities. The anxiety of the critics has been to bring the history into line with a normal human development. They have not in anything like the same degree aimed at spiritual probability or congruity. The recklessness with which they have adopted theories of literary personation and imaginative additions, and editings and re-editings without end, is sufficient to show how little they were deterred by any felt presence of God in the narrative. From this spiritual side, to the inquirer asking how the Old Testament exerted the influence of a revelation and prepared for the complete revelation in Christ, there are in the new theory, and the re-casting of Scripture in harmony with it, difficulties rising even to moral and spiritual impossibilities.

We can only choose two or three of these as

samples. All are agreed that Moses was the true founder of Israel. He had attained that conception of Jehovah which grew into the purer faith of later times. But how, when all other extant religions were becoming fossilised and stereotyped, did he leap up into living converse with the spiritual? *That* is the wonder, the original fact in Israel, which the critics pass over unexplained.

But again, and in an opposite direction, how can they account for Jehovah living in Moses and his people without imposing His will in some form, or calling them into some distinctive walk? Yet, according to their theory, He did not. The only laws which Moses gave were what the critics regard as the common law decisions summarised in Exod. xx.-xxiii. Even when they entered the promised land their sacrifices were nature festivals, and they worshipped at the common high places without any sense of rebuke. Jahveh was their deity, as Chemosh was the god of the Moabites. Yea, we are told that, down to the dawn of written prophecy, the religion of Israel was polytheism, with an opening toward monotheism!

Now that is an utterly incongruous picture, drawn by men who have never seriously tried to adjust their scheme of development to spiritual necessities. If Israel abode so long on that natural level, they were heathens outright. If one spark of the true Jehovah burned in Moses and Israel,

such quiescence was impossible. Think of Jehovah and idols dwelling calmly generation by generation in Jewish hearts! Think of Israel, unrebuked, offering their sacrifices to Jehovah on high places where offerings reeked to heathen gods! The whole is a gratuitous imagination, yea, an utter desecration of the central age of Hebrew history. In deference to mere theory, the critics have conjured up scenes and experiences which are entirely out of touch with the reigning spirit of the Old Testament.

We are quite sure that when Jehovah came into Israel He was a separating force—not merely revealing His glory, but binding the Jews to Himself. The ends of His self-discovery would demand their being walled off from surrounding peoples, that His influence might not be dissipated and lost. Grant that, and we can explain all that we find in these records. Even the most terrible passages do not make sceptics of us. We can quite understand how, despite divine love, men may disobey God, and, disobeying, go out in awful rebellion. We realise that, since He cannot give them up, God must come down to where men are, and, working on their darkened minds, use them on their level, so far as they can be used. Ehud's was not a refined achievement, but in an age of lawlessness it made for righteousness in the main. And so for those whom He called to service, Jehovah had often terrible work,

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The true justification of such circumstances lies in the time, and the end. Were they the best practically, reaching beyond themselves and serving the good of the world? Because we believe that these are associated with, and an integral part of, the inspired revelation of God's purpose to man, we are not to make them the rule of our practice to-day. The circumstances, whether in God's people or in their enemies, do not exist to-day. The revelation of God is a historic progressive revelation. We have been taught by love the duty of love. Renewed and living in the Spirit, we have a power for that higher life. But, to change somewhat the lines of Longfellow :—

“Those heights by Christians reached and kept,  
Were not attained by sudden flight.”

Step by step, under the guidance and help of God, men were lifted from the primitive ground of selfishness toward this spirit. The first struggles of the dawning sense of right with craven fear and passion were very tentative, and not unstained by defect; but they marked the dawn of God within a rude life. We have but little sympathy with the modern exquisites who scorned the ladder by which through the ages men have risen to where they now stand, and who cannot discern the ethical motive, and the continued worth for man, of such fierce loyalties and pitiless allegiances to right.

All that presents no insuperable stumbling-block to us. But what awakens in us feelings of moral pain which we cannot describe, is to see men after their own fancy draw a portrait of a crude, colourless, unethical, or faintly ethical Jehovah, who did not invest His people with a holy separating medium, but left them to live on the natural level, pretty much as they listed. What fills one with trembling is to see that lifeless simulacrum set up in place of the Great and Terrible One of Sinai, whom no one could see and live.

How men are befooled by their own imaginations! This theory tacitly assumes that Jehovah developed. That shows their light hold of spiritual fact. But what developed was the capacity of Israel to receive the vision of God. Jehovah remains the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever. The God and Father of Christ was He who, under veils of symbol and material glory, spoke to Moses. How, then, for a moment could He be held to be such as the Higher Criticism imagines? From the spiritual side, the ineptitude of the whole conception, the pitiful way in which it collapses so soon as examined, prevents us from saying what we feel about this Dædalus-like venture into regions beyond human reach.

Following downwards the history, we find after this long era,—barely distinguishable from heathenism,—the prophetic age. In the traditional

view, there had been the leavening influence of the Mosaic revelation, despite frequent backsliding, on the national life. Typical characters had been growing up in Israel, marked by broad wisdom and elevated spirit. The joy of spiritual worship had been bursting forth in sanctuary songs. Shrewd maxims or proverbs, instinct with an ethical life, passed from lip to lip. Burning utterances of great prophets unwritten, but living through their verve and beauty, became a national possession. The nation had been growing in appreciation of literary form, and in the delight of eloquent self-expression. And on that understanding, with that preparation, prophecy, though remarkable, was not an inexplicable phenomenon.

But on the critics' supposition, frankly, it is inexplicable. Indeed, we should not strain the facts if we said — impossible! We remember what we said of the sudden outburst of the Greek genius into perfect form in the *Iliad*. We count it a hazardous experiment arbitrarily to determine what is possible or impossible to the genius of a people rising from the trammels of the past. If the prophetic books were simply new buds of genius from the rude stock of Israel, we should just have to accept them, and put another wonder to the account of the human spirit.

But the more we study them we see that they mark a new departure, because they are a return



to an old ideal. Their roots are in the past. They pre-suppose a unique call and choice of God—an exceptional culture as of the vine, a union with God so sacred and intimate as that of marriage, marking Israel in contradistinction other to nations. The Jews were on a pedestal apart from all other peoples, and their present condition was not their misfortune, but their backsliding and whoredom.

But there is another note in the prophets, without which we cannot enter into the very genius of prophecy. All this was done for Israel, not on account of any goodness in Israel, but because God had a purpose to serve for the world.

Here, then, were the very gist and pivot of prophecy. The prophets were not mere publicists. They did not merely as ethical teachers deduce from their own perception of the immensely superior moral and spiritual ideals of Israel, their own private conviction of the necessary triumph of Israel over heathen beliefs. They did not merely get spiritual help to draw wider and surer conclusions from purely ethical grounds. No wonder, if such be the prevailing views, that candid thinkers are disposed to limit the range of prophecy in every way until these books are as much broken up by the critics as the five books of Moses themselves.

Prophecy stood on the covenant of God with His ancient people. Sovereignly He had called

them into their solitary place of privilege for a great purpose, affecting not only Israel but the entire future of the race. Granted, then, that Israel may have to undergo punishment, is the purpose of God to fail? Would He not be consistent with Himself, and carry out in some form His great designs? And so the central figure of prophecy is not Israel or Israel's consciousness of a unique destiny, but God, coming in to restore the tabernacle of David, to betroth Himself anew to corrupt Israel; by the Virgin's Son, the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Servant of Jehovah, accomplishing His great design, setting up a covenant of mercy and life, so that redemption may be in His grace and power.

Now, if that be so, prophecy must have had just such a creative past as the Pentateuch describes, for otherwise the central burden and movement of the prophecies are taken away. And prophecy is—not a mere blossoming of Israel's ethical genius, but something far loftier—a movement of God's Spirit on select moral leaders of the race, by whom, standing as they did on God's past covenant of promise and His present judgments, He was able to flash for all time the imperishable principles of His government, and to hold forth, in the nearer, or further, or most distant future, the ultimate triumph of His promise, spoken in far past time.

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Now, if that be the true view and compass of prophecy, how could it be preceded by an era of virtual naturalism? And more, how could it be followed, as in the critical theory it is followed, by such a combination of old documents—J E, worked up with the Priest's Code and Deuteronomy—into a literary whole? Surely that would be a paltry result of the unrivalled moral intensity of the prophets—the deliberate attempt to put another construction on their records than that which they really bore, turning the natural into the supernatural, a normal moral growth into a creative revelation originating a covenant history! As prophecy could never have taken origin from the one, it could not have produced the spurious growth of the other. With these burning prophecies discovering the counsel of the Eternal, how could a thing of shreds and patches like the Pentateuch, according to the critical view, be at once accepted and held by the Jews as unspeakably the most sacred of their sacred books? The more one enters into the innate character of the records, the more do the inadequacy and improbability of the critical view appear.

Well may we pray with the Psalmist "Let my heart be sound in Thy statutes that I be not ashamed." This is what comes of the attempt to shape God's revelation. The critics want to make

religion the crown of the natural, but with God it is the entrance of the supernatural. They want to portray a slow emergence of an immanent God, man shaping Him to his own thought in ever-growing consciousness, his own mind being, in a sense, the creator or producer of the ever-expanding idea. But in the counsel of God, revelation stands on a totally different plane. It is the supernatural discovery of God to beings whom He has made capable of knowing Him, but who are estranged. In this case the whole movement must come from His side — His the covenant purpose, the way of approach, the provision for all need: theirs submission, and through submission, growth up in the knowledge and love of God. Thus it is in the New Testament, thus and no other in the Old. Our friends need to travel much further than they dream ere they can succeed. Not only must they win the verdict of men: they must change the gracious covenant purpose of the Most High.

## VI

### THE RIGHTS OF REVELATION AT THE HANDS OF CRITICISM

Psalm xii. 6: "The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times."

WE are now drawing our inquiry to a practical and positive conclusion. At the outset we raised the fundamental issue between the self-witness of revelation and the critical view. In the former we have an authoritative revelation coming from God to man, the creative foundation of religious fellowship, and a covenant history. In the latter—if there be any acknowledgment of God at all—there is a slow, tentative uprising and immanence of God as an ethical force within human wills—a history full of myth, legend, and conscious or half-conscious fabrication, but reaching certain lofty moral ideals at last.

Having thus stated the searching issues, by way of obviating the necessity for this theory, we pointed out the unbroken and growing strength of the traditional view. Coming to the critical hypothesis, we brought it to a scientific test, and found that at no point did it comply with the conditions

which logicians have laid down as necessary to a scientific proof. In the following chapter we dealt with the critical analysis of Scripture, which has been looked upon as a chief foundation of the theory; and we found that it was highly problematical, and depended in part on the theory which it was brought in to establish. Then leaving argument in detail and taking the theory as a whole, we showed that its reconstruction of Scripture was inadequate and improbable.

And so we are now face to face with a double question: (1) How has so much of the talent and learning of this generation drifted into a blind alley, from which there is no safe issue but return? In other words, what errors of method have there been, what oversights in investigation, what mistakes in inference and argument from a defective induction of facts? And (2) that being ascertained, what considerations are necessary to be kept in view for the time to come? What rules should guide a sound criticism of Holy Scripture? These two fundamental questions will embrace all the points of the present chapter.

## I

In taking up the former of these two questions it will be wise to relate this particular critical movement to the great curve of tendency reaching

downward from the Reformation, of which it is the negative conclusion.

We have reached now the *reductio ad absurdum* of a course which has been pursued for centuries. We cannot get any farther along this line. Retracing our steps, and realising afresh the inextinguishable and solitary Divine element in Scripture, we shall have to set out, and with much greater care, and minds free from naturalistic bias, restate the relation of the human element in Scripture to the Divine, so as to leave the true revelation of God undimmed and unabridged. Nothing happens by chance. All things serve a Divine end. Through this very controversy, and taught by its errors and excesses, we shall yet possess a doctrine of Holy Scripture, more exactly and completely true, than the Church has ever possessed.

It will be necessary then to take a brief and fragmentary historical survey of the course of thought in relation to Holy Scripture within the period specified. Of vast importance for our subject will be found a clear and discriminating view of the Reformation standpoint. In that great spiritual upheaval the Reformers, though aroused to an intense interest in the Word of God, had no leisure for exact literary and historical inquiry. Wakened from the dead, lifted into new life, fertilised in every organ, and guided to new



departures along every avenue of the soul, they conceived of the book from their experience of its unapproached spirit and results. They struck on the central and characteristic quality of Scripture, its self-evident Divine origin, and left the human aspect and relations largely out of view. In this they laid hold of by far the most important truth—a truth from which, amid all changes and convulsions, the living Church has not declined.

We must go very much farther, however, if we are to enter into the true Reformation conviction. To understand how they could make Scripture the authoritative rule of faith to which the private judgment must bow, we have to understand how the conviction came to them—the origin, the force, the scope of the testimony that Scripture was of God. That was no passing phase of dogmatism, and did not arise from the exigencies of their position, but sprang from what was most central and imperishable in their immediate fellowship with God. Perhaps the most deeply experienced of us, in this later day, may have something to learn from these masters in Israel, as they speak of the *testimonium Spiritus Sancti* (the witness of the Holy Spirit) to the living Word of God.

Take this passage from Calvin's "Institutes":<sup>1</sup>  
 "Let it therefore be held as fixed, that those who

<sup>1</sup> Bk. i., c. vii, 5.

are inwardly taught by the Holy Spirit acquiesce implicitly in Scripture, that Scripture, carrying its own evidence along with it, deigns not to submit to proofs and arguments, but owes the full conviction with which we ought to receive it to the testimony of the Spirit. Enlightened by Him we no longer believe, either on our own judgment or that of others, that the Scriptures are from God; but in a way superior to human judgment feel perfectly assured—as much so as if we beheld the divine image visibly impressed on it—that it came to us by the instrumentality of men from the very mouth of God. We ask not for proofs or probabilities on which to rest our judgment, but we subject our intellect and judgment to it as too transcendent for us to estimate. This, however, we do, . . . because we have a thorough conviction that in holding it we hold unassailable truth, not like miserable men whose minds are enslaved by superstition, but because we feel a divine energy living and breathing in it—an energy by which we are drawn and animated to obey it, willingly indeed and knowingly, but more vividly and effectually than could be done by human will and knowledge.”

Never, perhaps, in human language has been written out more fully and discriminatingly, what every true believer has felt, and been convinced of, and acted upon, in relation to Holy Scripture.

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We receive the Bible on the evidence of our own spiritual sense, and with such a fulness of illumination by the Spirit that we accept it as demonstrably from God. This is no mystic dream, for we are renewed within through the reception of the truth, and since we have thus experienced a saving change which brings us into fellowship with God, this book is henceforth to us the voice of God. As Dorner<sup>1</sup> says: "The believing man is the organ which the Holy Scriptures create for themselves in order to expound themselves through the same."

Substantially, and from the spiritual standpoint, that was and is the truth. All who deny, or do not sufficiently allow for this unique fact, simply dash themselves against a rock of spiritual conviction and experience, which they cannot injure since it is rooted in the unseen, and which will break into harmless spray the billows of their arguments.

After the Reformation, however, this view was pushed to an extreme, even to the entire ignoring of the other aspects of Revelation—that it came through human agents, at specific times, in a certain gradation or progress of truth, suited to the immediate circumstances and the expanding faculties of man. But in the subsidence of the spiritual fervour and vision of the early reforming days, the cool,

<sup>1</sup> "Protestant Theology," vol. i. p. 242.

critical mood which took account of these rose into the ascendant. Now let it be said frankly that these difficulties were inevitable; this side had to be taken account of. God could only be served by the full truth, on the Divine side and on the human. Authority could not be brought in to silence inconvenient questionings. And when we are dealing with matters of fact, and date, and authorship, nothing will suffice but genuine research and the sifted truth.

Thus far we go the whole length with those who stand for independent critical research. If we have got a document whose age and authorship it is our duty to discover, we must attend solely to the facts, external and internal, which may help to a solution. Let the facts be got at, and bias or authority set aside.

But still, critics are only to be listened to in so far as fairly and adequately they interpret facts. There is nothing in them, or about them, which qualifies them to lay down, before they begin, what sort of facts they are going to find. Yet under the specious appearance of impartiality this is what they have done.

(1) To show this, let us take an instance from the seventeenth century, and another from our own time.

Grotius, the great Dutch jurist and theologian, went upon this principle, that the Bible should

be interpreted on the same rules of criticism which men use in the study of all other ancient writings. To this the redoubtable Warburton rejoined: "Nothing could be more reasonable than his principle; but unluckily he deceived himself in the application of it. . . . He went on this reasonable ground, that the prophecies should be interpreted like all other ancient writings; and on examining their authority he found them to be truly divine. When he had gone thus far, he then preposterously went back again, and commented as if they were confessed to be merely human."<sup>1</sup>

This shrewd criticism rings on the centre. By all means let students be left free to deal with each writing according to the evidence external and internal, taking everything into account which may fairly determine their judgment. But when they come upon a collection of writings manifestly unique, animated by a spirit quite exceptional, moving on a method and plane of its own—does not this rule require that they take this book also, and deal with it according to the existing evidence? If not, they are guilty of the transgression of their own rule.

The only legitimate meaning of the canon "that the Bible should be interpreted like all other ancient writings" is, that it should be sub-

<sup>1</sup> See for quotations, Hannah's "Bampton Lecture," 1863, p. 241.

jected to the same scientific tests as other writings, the book being taken as it stands and judged by the light it brings. A true critic of Virgil's *Æneid* sinks into the heart of that great poem, catches from within the strains of influence, literary, historical, contemporary, which guided his thoughts, and impressed their mould upon this crowning expression of his genius, accumulates every fragment of material likely to throw light upon the author, his times, training, and so forth, and so sets him in his true place. But suppose the critics started in another fashion, and set up other Latin writers as a standard by which to test the *Æneid*, fixed upon certain things which we must not expect in such a poet at such a time, and treated as interpolations whatever passages rose above all existing models, would they ever be likely to arrive at any conclusions worth listening to regarding Virgil or his poem? Yet that is the very malpractice of which the higher critics are guilty, and in an extraordinary degree, against the Old Testament.

The critics have misunderstood their own canon, or rather—for that is doing them too much honour—they have strained and perverted it to a false issue. The world has accepted the principle in one sense; they have used it for another and very different end. What we have all assented to in this canon is, that the claim made for Scripture of being an inspired revelation shall not be allowed

to bar unfettered inquiry into the dates, authorship, and so forth of the documents.

But what they have read into it is, that the laws and methods which we have found at work in other ancient writings must be made regulative in judging of the growth of the Scriptures; that they must be reduced to the same level, and treated as on a footing with these writings, all exceptional qualities in the Scriptures being dealt with after heathen analogies, and reduced to what critics have come to regard as natural proportions.

Now, beyond all dispute, this is a flagrant begging of the question. What warrant have they to fix the limits of the real and the probable within certain narrow bounds, and simply rule out all that lies beyond as unreal? Their critical equipment gives them no such title, even if they had fully and fairly applied their law. This is an *a priori* assumption, which vitiates their conclusions. What they must do, if their word is to be taken, is to indulge in no assumptions, to be loyal to fact wherever they find it, to take up every document in the conditions within which it has arisen, patiently to weigh every exceptional element in the light of all the circumstances out of which it has come, and of the end at which it aims, and, free of the binding chains of theory, follow reality wherever it leads.

Here the critics are far behind intellectual



workers in other fields. Historians used to write history after this fashion: with their narrow sectarian views of the course of human progress they arrogated all good to their own party, and could find only the most crooked and corrupt motives for those who were opposed. How different, however, is the course to-day, even with writers who have strong convictions. They are marked not only by the sense of fairness, but by a high resolve to bring out every angle and aspect of the fact, to interpret, from within, the standpoints of the combatants, and to move on to a conclusion after every point of view has been fairly put, and each interest has been adequately represented. Indeed, truth demands nothing less. The partisan spirit of the higher criticism; the steady refusal to allow for facts of immense import in determining even the external history of Scripture writings; the overriding of obvious spiritual laws by heathen analogies and judgments of probability and improbability; the unwillingness to look at the bare possibility of the ancient writings which they make the standard being a record of an unnatural condition, in which noble human faculties were making an ineffectual struggle against corruption and decay, and that the true order of human progress was emerging in the Scriptures themselves — these outstanding characteristics show how prejudiced, how one-sided, and therefore

how radically, inconclusive this whole critical method has been.

But, it may be asked, how can we act otherwise if the plea of revelation and inspiration is not to be allowed in bar of evidence? Our answer is definite and unmistakable. These pleas are not to be allowed as hindering inquiry, but it is by no means implied that in order to be strictly impartial we must go away from the outstanding facts and characteristic qualities of Scripture, and not give full weight to such circumstances as their peculiar spirit, their internal unity, and their actual influence on the world. To judge them in studied oblivion of all these, by heathen analogies and the supposed course of ethnic development, is not justice but one-sidedness. Critics must take account of facts; must give a full and dispassionate interpretation of all the facts as they stand, in so far as these can be supposed to influence in any way the growth of the related literature. Though we set aside, for purposes of critical inquiry, the pleas of revelation and inspiration as barring research, we do not set aside the objective facts written plainly on the history of the world, which give warrant and justification for these pleas. How in the name of reason are you going to explain the origin of a literature by going away from all that is most characteristic in that literature?

Perhaps we have laboured this point with sufficient fulness; but we must remember that from the days of Grotius to those of Kuenen and Wellhausen this defective canon of criticism has been the source of a critical treatment of (especially) Old Testament Scripture, which, more guarded and limited to begin with, has reached its natural goal in the revolutionary theories of the higher criticism. If we are not to have a recurrence of such naturalistic conclusions we must make a stand for a better critical method, without bias and exclusive assumptions, not arbitrarily shaping the facts which afterwards it seeks to explain, but receiving them as they come in the course of providence, and dealing with them as they stand.

To show how completely contrary to reality this method of criticism is, let us enter on a larger and more general view. Let us come away from the special theological domain and look at critical methods in the light of the actual progress of the world in ancient and modern times.

It is not customary to explain the conquering by the superseded force. Yet that is what the critics have done. They join hands with those anthropologists who on natural lines describe how, from the most rudimentary beginnings, men grew up through various stages of clarifying superstition to the loftier religions and civilisations of the ancient world. With good

scientific warrant, as we have already shown, we refuse to accept that view of ancient development. But, at any rate, that old world ended in irredeemable collapse. Despite the periods of ascent under the spell of great religious leaders, in such nations as Greece and Rome, India and China, the traces of degeneracy over wide areas and through long centuries are unmistakable. What arrested that collapse, and breathed into corrupt peoples life from the dead, and built up the modern world on new ethical foundations, was the spiritual force which entered the world in Judaism when it had reached full expression in Christianity. Yet while they are compelled to admit a new and controlling effect in history, they cannot away with the idea that there may have entered into history a new and proportionate cause. They must explain the new overcoming element by the old forces and analogies of the superseded faiths! Yes, even although they are compelled to admit, as many critics are, that there is a spirit in the Bible which is not of earth, they must perforce tie up the living spirit of God to the lines of progress in heathendom, and refuse to entertain the idea that He may have moved out to the redemption of man on a path of His own.

Nor does this fact stand alone. During the nineteen centuries, despite recession and decays, Scripture has been moving the western nations to

platforms and ideals of which the old world never dreamed; and for a century past, crowning the progress of the early centuries, Scripture, in the hands of her children, has been carrying to the moribund nations of paganism that truth which is proving, on a world-wide scale, to be the agent of individual and national resurrection. Yet, although from an entirely original standpoint, the religion of the Bible is emancipating the world from the bondage of corruption, criticism refuses to believe that it may have come into the world to effect this all-transforming end. It must be a development out of the same natural conditions with the nations it has redeemed, any difference between it and them (which only some of the critics allow) lying in a furtive infusion of the spiritual into select human minds at later stages!

Let the critics say what they please, the theory does not account for the facts. What Judaism and Christianity have effected in the world demands a different explanation of their origins. In the seclusion of their studies, remote from the fierce conflicts in which the destinies of men, upward and downward, are being fixed, the critics put all this treasure of fact aside. They confound these incontestable realities with theological assumptions, and what they slightly call the ecclesiastical view; and, treating the letter of Scripture as a subject for anatomy,

they cut and carve, set up their analogies and homologies with the exhumed skeletons of primitive beliefs, in utter disregard of even such commanding effects as we have described. Such inquiries may have an academic interest, and satisfy a vain curiosity, but as a solid contribution to knowledge, which aspires to guide action and form the basis of an organised society, they are weighed in the balances and found wanting.

(2) Now let us take an exposition of the critical method from our own time. And we go to one of the strongest minds which have been engaged in critical research, a man of enormous resource, and with a keen sense of the spiritual element in Holy Scripture. The late Professor Robertson Smith<sup>1</sup> writes:

“We have got to go back step by step, and retrace the history of the sacred volume up to the first origin of each separate writing which it contains. . . . It is not needful in starting to lay down any fixed rules of procedure. The ordinary laws of evidence and good sense must be our guides. And these we must apply to the Bible just as we should do to any other ancient book. This is the only principle we have to lay down. And it is plainly a just principle. For the transmission of the Bible is not due to a continued miracle, but to a watchful Providence

<sup>1</sup> “The Old Testament, etc.,” pp. 25, 26.

ruling the ordinary means by which ancient books have all been handed down."

To these words in themselves we have little objection; but we have a very great objection to the way in which they have been applied. The writer whom we have just quoted is among the frankest in recognising an element of revelation in Scripture. But this canon is generally interpreted to mean that faith in the Bible, as being a writing of more than natural force and influence, must be kept in a water-tight compartment, jealously excluded from the least contact with criticism. Yea, that is only half the truth. The critical position is much more one-sided than we have described. Not only do the critics refuse to entertain the idea that the exceptional contents of Scripture might have had some controlling influence on the dates and manner of production of the sacred books, but they calmly assume that mainly such motives as obtain among men and in ordinary history could have actuated the writers.

Reasonings like these are very common. The oldest tradition of the Pentateuch is found in the J and E narratives—so we are told; and one sure proof that J belonged to the southern portion of the kingdom is that in the story of Joseph, while E makes Reuben the good brother, J from local jealousy makes Judah to occupy that place! The



legends of Abraham and Isaac—the heroes of the southern saga—are given more fully in J than in E, since the former belongs to the south; and in the E portion of the narrative, patriotism makes the writer change the patriarch's habitat from Hebron to Beersheba, "a sanctuary much frequented by pilgrims from the northern kingdom." And this was the level of motive and consideration on which writers moved, who have commanded the attention and educated the higher life of mankind!<sup>1</sup>

Through their refusal to recognise the play of higher motives and considerations which might surely have risen in connection with so lofty a writing, critics are driven to far more dubious expedients. Since, in their mistaken adhesion to a biassed theory, they will not receive the self-witness of revelation that in Mosaism we have a true delineation of a creative divine beginning, to support their naturalistic view they have to bring in the hypothesis of personation and conscious fabrication.

Now, all the reasoning in the world cannot make that to be other than of ill-savour. And most of all it is an abhorrent suggestion when used by those who believe that there is a real element of revelation in the Old Testament.

It was lawful for the writer of Deuteronomy,

<sup>1</sup> For points in this paragraph see "Encyclopædia Biblica," p. 1074.

for instance, to personate Moses in an ideal enlargement and recasting of the law, to invest it with a vast amount of personal reminiscence and historic detail so as to create the impression of a contemporary writing, and to give the whole forth as his. God was to be glorified, and the religion which was to save men from all sin and bind the soul to the absolute True was to be served, by schemes such as these! And, worse in a sense than these, after the prophets had raised to an unexampled height for that day the moral level, it was seemingly lawful to exalt the national beginnings by representing as a creative revelation given by God from Sinai, what was really the slow and natural growth of centuries.

That is simply the *reductio ad absurdum* of a vicious method. The sane conclusion is that the critics have not examined all the facts, and that the supposititious causes, which they gratuitously allege, could never have produced the books themselves, or the unbroken unity in which they cohere. You cannot get at the real origin of the several books composing a literature without taking some account of their contents, quality, and aim; without considering how these may have moulded their recipients, and set new currents, active and reactive, in movement through their history. In the passage from which we have already quoted, Professor Robertson Smith

says: "Every fact is welcome, whether it come from Jewish tradition or from a comparison of old MSS. and versions, or from an examination of the several books with one another, and of each book in its own inner structure." And that is true not only of the body but of the soul of the book.

May there not have risen out of this literature a sense of the Divine, a transfiguring faith, which would make men insensible to petty local jealousies in striving to commit to writing the footprints of God in their history; which would make them incapable of putting words into His mouth, and presuming to eke out His dread self-manifestation with fanciful additions? Must you not make allowance for these moral and spiritual effects in trying to account for the origins and succession of this literature?

Again, if there be such a breath of holiness in this book, would not that provoke reaction among some of the people? And so you might have side by side in a generation, ay, in the same individuals, lofty spiritual aptitudes and wild reversion to barbarism and lust. If you did not take that into account you might go utterly wrong, concluding that the men capable of the barbarity could not belong to the same time as those who showed the spiritual insight, that the man who killed Uriah could not be the singer of the sweetest psalms.

Have we not said enough to show, or at least to suggest, how disregard of the soul of the literature might occasion critics drawing the most erroneous inferences and laying down the most mistaken conclusions? But we must go further. Recall Professor Robertson Smith's assertion: "The Bible does speak to the heart of man in words that can only come from God." But does not that introduce a new factor? May not God have a method of discovering Himself all His own? And if that be possible, you must consider that possibility. If you find this to be true, and you want your criticism to account for all the facts of the case, you must reckon with this fact likewise.

"Ah, but," you say, "we were to deal with the Scriptures in the same way as with all other ancient writings." Of course, we rejoin, to begin with, giving the one no advantage over the other. But if, as you pursue your inquiries, you find that there are exceptional elements in Scripture, are you not to say honestly out what you find? Are you not to deal with the exceptional elements as they present themselves, according to all the facts, judging righteous judgment? Is criticism simply to be paralysed before facts that cannot be ignored? And since it has been living so long within the strait limits of the natural, is it to be allowed to disintegrate the Old Testament

in the vain attempt to get it within the limits of the natural? Rather let them refuse to set any arbitrary limit to the realm of fact, and step up into the higher world of ethical and spiritual forces into which Scripture leads.

In the bright work of a recent naturalist we read a story of a menagerie tiger, which rises to the memory in this connection. By an accident his cage was broken into fragments, and he was set free. His first impulse, translated instantly into act, was to leap out into liberty. But in his long confinement liberty had become so foreign to him that he leaped back, and sat crouching among the ruins. We have in these last generations been suffering the reality of the spiritual to be circumscribed, by strait theories of physical law and mechanical evolution. And so many Christians prefer to crouch amid the ruins of a disintegrated revelation, rather than dare the open, in loyalty to every side of their natures, and in the resolute endeavour to search every avenue and aspect of truth.

## II

We have thus seen the defects of method which have marked the investigation of the Higher Criticism. And now we come to a much more difficult task, which in the very nature of things can only, to begin with, be very imperfectly accom-

plished. In our first chapter we affirmed that there was a legitimate place for criticism, and that, even when this hypothesis was swept away, criticism must proceed. One main lesson, then, to be learned from this controversy is to eliminate error from critical methods, and in the light of experience to draw out and lay down certain rules which must be observed in all thorough critical investigation of Scripture.

True, there are some lessons which lie on the surface, and which may immediately be drawn. Most new sciences, which afterwards have risen to great place, have had to profit by mistakes. Astronomy went far beyond its proper sphere into the illusory quests of astrology. Chemistry set out on many a fruitless errand after the philosopher's stone and the elixir of life. The dawn of geology was marked by the fierce conflicts of extreme theories. And so the revival of Hebrew studies, which the last generation has witnessed, and the attempt by critical methods to break into and lay bare the sealed centuries of antiquity, have been marked by a boldness of theory which the sober judgment of the world will not support, and by audacities of method which have gone as widely aside from the realm of fact, as the calculations of the astrologer and the labours of the alchemist.

Criticism is coming to see the folly of tying

itself to any exclusive theory of human life and progress. Existing to discover not the loftier truth of faith, but the lower truth of fact, it should be simply loyal to the facts which lie outside its own special sphere. The weapons of criticism being merely external tests, researches, accumulations of illustrative material, her one function is to arrive, from without, at an adequate judgment of date, authorship, circumstances, aim, and end. Even when criticism considers the contents and spirit of the writings, it is only to find a clue to the time when they might have been written, affinities which may throw light on authorship, and the associations amid which the writings may have sprung. It is for Christians generally, and for trained Bible students in especial, to approach revelation from the central standpoint, and by the Spirit enter into their spiritual comprehension. This is the only plane on which their contents can be discovered to the soul, and from which they can put their power forth on the individual and on society.

As the Bible student recognises the place of the critic, the critic must respect the spiritual findings of innumerable saints, martyrs, confessors, thinkers, who in the power of the truth have set up a world-wide kingdom, and who, despite all diversities, have been one in Christ Jesus. This



is what Scripture has wrought out to in the course of the world, in the histories of nations, and in lives innumerable. Surely these facts are to enter into the critic's reckoning. He has no right to alter these, to suppose them other than they have discovered themselves to be, to imagine a course of events leading up to a view of revelation fundamentally different from that which revelation itself expresses. That is not scientific criticism, but disloyalty to the realities of the situation, and speculation in face of the facts.

All that is abundantly plain, and has been frequently pointed out in the course of this discussion. But when we come to map out in detail a true and adequate method which will satisfy every claim of criticism to thoroughness and independence, and yet not slur over and leave out of account all the claims of Scripture to full and fair consideration as a wholly exceptional spiritual force, we can only hope to lay down a first tentative set of rules, which will require to be altered and improved by subsequent discussion.

(1) Every writing should be accepted provisionally as it stands, and studied from its own viewpoint, and in the light of its own accompanying traditions. Conjecture should only be resorted to when all reasonable probability is set at defiance, and when it supplies the explanation which satisfies every requirement of fact and judgment.

If one reads the opening pages of, say, Kuenen's "History of Israel" and then takes note of the sentiments and practice of leading historians, he will be constrained to the conclusion that conjecture has been employed to a wholly unlawful extent in the higher criticism. Froude says, "Conjecture is of little value in history"; while it has been the critic's chief weapon.

We therefore judge that literary documents are to be accepted as they stand, and in the setting within which they are found; at least, until every possibility of a rational explanation has been exhausted.

Now, in the present case this has not been done. Men have hurried to conjecture, have heaped together all sorts of surface analogies and correspondences, without exhausting the facts of Scripture. Admitted that we have here very exceptional elements—miracle, direct communications of God, prophecy, a wonderful interrelation of parts—and even though some of these seem to have analogy with the legendary elements of other histories, the duty of criticism is without prejudice to examine the facts before arriving at any conclusion. The vice of so-called scientific inquiry lies in the sudden leaping to general conclusions through a rash use of inference and hypothesis. So Huxley tried to explain life by delusive analogies that left out the material point. So did the Frenchman

set up an illusory comparison between the liver secreting bile and the brain secreting thought. So did Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill confound moral distinctions with a totally different principle of action, utility. The manifoldness of existence is in constant danger from speculators, who, to bring the universe within their theory, leave out incongruous facts.

To come back to our case. Granted the exceptional elements, should not these be fairly and without prejudice considered by the light they bring? Before we resort to any hypothesis about the Old Testament, should we not note the facts? There are many circumstances about this Book which ought to give us pause. Recall the statement of Josephus, quoted in an earlier chapter, in which he says that the attachment of the Jews to their literature was on a very different plane from that of the Greeks to theirs. Regarding them as Divine, they feared to alter them in any way. Frequently they "endured racks and deaths of all kinds upon the theatres" rather than say one word against their laws and the records that contained them.

Then we have the remarkable tribute paid to the literature of an obscure Asiatic people by the most cultured nation of antiquity in the production of the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament. But there are facts of far deeper significance than

these—the passionate devotion of a nation to the Old Testament, and most of all to the Pentateuch, as a revelation of God; and in this the very soul of their separation from all other nations; the spring of a tenacious valour at times, as under the Maccabees, one of the wonders of the world; and the fertiliser not only of intense personal piety but of spiritual thought, which led them to clearer definition and fuller expression of many truths lying less clearly defined in Holy Scripture. We have seen already how the age of Ezra and Nehemiah received the Pentateuch with unspeakable reverence and submission as the very voice of God. Those are phenomena worthy of attention.

And when we take, say, the Pentateuch from the hands of Ezra, we find everything in keeping with these effects. We find a history of a creative Divine purpose working itself by successive steps from Abraham to Moses into the life of the Jewish nation—a kind of fact to which, as the late Bishop Westcott told us, there is no parallel among heathen nations. And, wonderful to tell, through a strangely chequered and very disappointing after history, that Divine purpose goes on—not merely to repeat itself, but to reappear in strikingly original forms and in more articulate expression in far separated ages. These are facts surely very pertinent to the task of forming a

judgment regarding these writings—unprecedented and unparalleled facts, unlike anything else to be found in the world.

And now, looking down the stream, there is another fact which throws even these into the shade. Old Testament Scripture ceases, many think nowadays, not with Malachi, but with such books as Ecclesiastes and Daniel. Still, across an eventful gap, the spirit of the old religion reasserts itself; ay, and much more than that, all the threads of purpose in the Old Testament Scriptures are gathered up and find their ideal fulfilment in a series of historic events, reaching their crown in the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ.

Are events like these to be left out of account in estimating the literature which contains them? Surely the exceptional facts point to exceptional causes being at work. And if criticism satisfies itself with these is it not bound to speak out its honest mind? Think of critics going away from all that, refusing to make allowance for such incontestable truths, and bringing analogies from a totally different condition of things, that of a decadent heathenism, to serve as a Procrustes' bed on which Scripture must be forcibly disjointed. Henceforth, before there can be any question of conjecture and imaginative reconstruction, criticism must show that it has exhausted every possible solution of the facts as they stand.

(2) In connection with Scripture, then, there are exceptional elements of a very remarkable kind, and we must be ready to take account of any new forces which may have come into individual character as helping in part to account for the origins of Scripture.

This is a point of much greater importance than may at first sight appear. Scripture is suffering from presumptions underlying modern discussion, which are not fair to the matter in hand, and which leave out of view most important elements necessary to a just conclusion. A process of minimising marks this movement, which is not scientific rigour, but betrays a lack of broad impartiality in weighing all the points in the case, and an eagerness to make for the negative and lowest possible solution.

For instance, we hear it said, whatever the story of creation may be, it is not history. Therefore, what can it be but legend? And when other accounts are found, such as the Chaldæan, what can the Bible account be but a copy of this? Yea, rioting in the furthest possibilities of negative suggestion, critics throw out the mere guess, that this story, placed in the forefront of our sacred books, may have come in so late as the Exile. Is that a kind of intellectual process which a disciplined judgment can receive with respect? It deserves no respect, being only bold guessing

in a negative interest. They have not taken full account of all the documents. Genesis is a document as truly as that exhumed in 1875 by the late George Smith. Because it has been in the hands of civilised people for far more than two, possibly three thousand years, it is not the less, but rather the more, to be considered. The account is inherently more worthy of respect than any other. Free from every mythical element disfiguring the various accounts, it stands a most worthy and noble beginning of a revelation which still commands the submission of the most advanced peoples.

We have here, also, some light as to when and how this narrative was written down for posterity. In the Mosaic Age, during a period of profound religious upheaval, after God had come forth into a positive historical relation to His people, and they had been brought into covenant relation with Him, Moses, with the instinct of a great prophet, evidently felt that since this movement must have a meaning and influence upon all the future, it would be necessary to relate it to God's discoveries of Himself which had gone before. Here we see how religion lifts him above all ordinary motives of the annalist, and bring in new forces, purifying and controlling his whole activity. He is discovering the doings of the holy, eternal One. He is unravelling a Divine



thought, only to be served by the sifted truth, and in nowise by the imaginations of men. He has got a clue, also, to the meaning of time, as the unfolding of a purpose of education and redemption. And more, he abases himself, that in his continual submission God may guide him into the truth.

Even as parts of a critical equipment for getting at the kind of truth he was seeking, were not these forces valuable? We see him travelling up the stream of time, through the ever receding traditions of his people, back to Jacob, Isaac, Abraham; and at every backward step the movements of God in preparation stand out in original Divine reality. Then, with the master thought before him that God was moving on to a world-end, he relates the history of his own people to the larger world by tracing the genealogy of Abraham to Shem. But even here he does not stop. These first eleven chapters of Genesis are the most wonderful historic writing in the world. Through the line of Shem he reaches out within wider horizons still to the well-heads of the three chief branches of the human race, in Shem, Ham, and Japhet. God had said to him, "All the earth is Mine." What had been happening at Sinai had significance for all mankind, and it was for him to bring them into relation.

Up till now we can easily conceive Moses to have been guided by tradition, the inner meaning

and fulness of which were opened up by God. But even here his adventurous spirit does not rest. Crossing the gulf of the flood, he travels back through silent generations which may have left some traces in the huge masses of Cyclopean architecture here and there, and in the remains of prehistoric museums.

But it may be said, who of us can be sure that he is on historic ground here? May he not have swept together loose and vague traditions, holding for facts what were fancies, and not discriminating realities from dreams? How can we attach importance to writings that can have little or nothing to show for their historic worth?

At this point we wish to call attention to a great wonder. Archæology has discovered in the traditions of all primitive peoples the most ample proof that Moses is on the line of actuality, or at least what primitive peoples received as actual, back to the creation. Allow me to quote from a writer of repute, Ebrard:<sup>1</sup> "The most diverse peoples, sprung from the most diverse stems, have the remembrance of one common primitive history of their common ancestors, and this common ground in their reminiscences extends down exactly to the building of the tower and the confusion of languages, and no further." And more in detail:

<sup>1</sup> "Christian Apologetics," vol. iii. pp. 319-321, Clark's Theological Library.

"To all parts of the earth they took the remembrance of one invisible God, who in the beginning had revealed Himself visibly to man; of a sin committed by the first parents, begun by the wife in her eating of forbidden fruit under the influence of a tempter, who for the most part appears in connection with a serpent; of the entrance of death as consequence and punishment of this sin; of a brother's murder; of three brothers who discovered the arts, namely, the working of metals; of a race of mighty men or giants who rebelled against God; of a flood that covered the highest mountains, in which all men but one family perished; of a mountain on whose top this family landed; of birds which the father of this family sent forth; of a rainbow which stood in some relation to their deliverance; of the three sons of this man as ancestors of the various peoples; of a new rebellion against God, when men sought to rear a building which should reach to heaven; of a fire from heaven which destroyed this building, confused the languages, and scattered the races of mankind over the face of the earth."

But, in addition to facts like these, which are surely remarkable, we have in the Babylonish creation epic "remarkable parallels to the first Biblical cosmogony." The higher critic who uses these words admits "that it might be possible to explain the Babylonian myth as a development of the

simpler and purer tradition contained in the Bible," although he cannot accept this, mainly because he has accepted the view that the Bible account was drawn up in the Exile.<sup>1</sup> Having been delivered from submission to the critical theory in previous chapters, we take the writer's words as briefly establishing the essential concord of the account in Genesis with other ancient traditions.

And now to draw our conclusion, and from this establish the reasonableness, and indeed necessity, of our second rule. Is it not most remarkable how from every corner of the earth there have turned up a multitude of independent witnesses that Moses is on the trunk line of universal human tradition? But there is something far more remarkable than that. In all these other peoples those primitive traditions subsisted as mere recollections, more or less fading, modified by tricks of memory and the iridescence of imagination, and having no relation to the present and the future. But in one nation, and one writing, not only do they appear in a purer form, but they stand out in a visible and definite relation to God, as the first steps in and toward His divine purpose, on a level with, and related to, all that is to follow.

Of course, if men will abide on the level of naturalism, and refuse to take account of these outstanding facts—if everything must be ex-

<sup>1</sup> Hastings' "Bible Dictionary," Art. *Cosmogony*, vol. i. 505.

plained on purely natural grounds by ordinary means—they must be left to blunder on with their utterly inconsistent supposition, that Israel borrowed from Babylon, yet so wonderfully improved on Babylon. But why shut out those higher elements—that Moses had, in the great movement culminating at Sinai, caught a glimpse of the Divine purpose, and so entered into the meaning of “the dark backward abyss of time” in relation thereto; and that he was able, not only to remove the imaginative and retain the actual in old traditions, but to bring out their essential Divine significance in relation to all that was to come? That is what has actually been done, as even critics confess. Why do they refuse, then, to face the whole problem; to entertain the supposition that exceptional effects may have had very distinguishing causes; and to study without prejudice every new element of consecrated character and spiritual illumination which may have entered into so unexampled a result?

And now I must state and illustrate much more briefly the next three rules.

(3) Where elements are found in a literature, which are fitted to exert, and have actually exerted, a highly special influence, these may have had the effect of rapidly ripening the human spirit in certain directions, and starting new and early literary developments.

Nothing is more certain, to a thoughtful reader perusing works of modern criticism, than that judgments are passed on dates, and circumstances, and authorship of works, on imperfect and even erroneous canons. Thus, Wellhausen, who regards the Psalter as the hymn-book of the Congregation of the Second Temple, goes on to say: "The question is not whether it contains any post-exilic psalms, but whether it contains any pre-exilic psalms." And Professor Cheyne, in his Bampton Lecture on "The Origin and Religious Contents of the Psalter," has maintained that "the whole Psalter, with the possible exception of parts of Psalm xviii., is exilic, belonging mainly to the Persian and Greek period, and containing a considerable number of Maccabæan Psalms."<sup>1</sup>

The clue to such extreme opinions of Canon Cheyne is given in the very title of his volume. The origin and contents of the Psalter are considered "in the light of Old Testament criticism and the history of Religions." Subjective ideas of a natural development, and comparison of the progress of thought and belief in heathen nations, are allowed positively to determine the dates of Hebrew Psalms. But it is matter of common notoriety that epoch-making movements exert the most powerful quickening influence on the literary

<sup>1</sup> For references and summary, see Kirkpatrick, "The Book of Psalms," xxxvii, xxxviii.

activities of their time. That great era in European history of which the origin of printing, the discoveries of Columbus, the revival of learning, and, crowning all, the Reformation, were chief factors, set in motion in many directions new trends of intellectual activity. Rapidly struck out in the heat and fervour of a great inspiration, principles, ideals, views of human rights and duty were in short space produced, that have governed Europe and America ever since.

Could men have been brought into fellowship with God at Sinai, could they have realised His continuous presence in their history, and His wonderful deliverance for them, without that reacting on their life, and on their thought and feeling? Is it at all unbelievable that such exceptional influences would originate literary works out of the common? Is it difficult to imagine that David, that great chief, though marked by many rude traits of his time, might be caught up into flights of song, realising God's distinguishing goodness to Jesse's shepherd son, and the far-reaching purpose which He had in view in raising him to the throne? What happened in other nations may be helpful, but is not authoritative. The facts which we accumulated in Chapter V. about the Accadian Psalms, and the outburst of Homeric song at the dawn of the Greek history, show that there is no room for



dogmatism. Account must be taken of all these special circumstances in Israel's history, and if they reasonably explain the existence of earlier and striking outbursts of song, that should be decisive, despite what obtained elsewhere.

Let us pause on this point a moment further. The origins of Israel were so peculiar, brought Israel into so special a relation to God, that they have produced a literature wholly unexampled in the heathen world. Where have you any writings like those of the Hebrew prophets? These sprang in unexampled splendour from the vision and faith of Israel under Divine guidance.

Again, where else is a literary phenomenon to be found like that of "Job," in which we have a soul wrestling with the problem of right in relation to God, which was only effectually raised in Israel, and reaching out to a vision of the Divine—not only holding to His due, but putting Himself in the place of the creature to fulfil and help—surely a vivid anticipation of Messiah, and of the full revelation in Christ?

If monuments so solitary and wonderful sprang from the Jewish spirit, who shall refuse to allow to the Hebrew lyrical genius, in touch with God, much more than was possible to heathen singers? They did not need Persian prompting to express their belief in immortality! Such a conviction lies

implicit in real contact, such as Moses and David enjoyed, with God.

But, (4) with such a Divine Creative movement as that which started Israel's history, allowance must be made for very powerful reactions and reversions from time to time.

This indicates another frequent source of error in the higher criticism. One great reason why critics will not accept the Mosaic economy as it stands is because when they come down to after-times they find the people rude, half savage, with an undeveloped worship, and the ideals and even practice of Sinai almost sunk out of sight. And so they imagine a slow natural development up from heathenism—from nature-festivals and a religion hardly to be distinguished from the surrounding tribal cults.

This speculation suits the natural temper of our time; but such a view is inadequate and unscientific. A religion which sprang from the ground keeps to the ground. If there be nothing save the earthly and natural in, nothing save that can come out. But when you look at Jewish naturalism, so-called, you find in the deepest descent that "a spark disturbs the clod." Events happen that have no correspondence in heathenism. Men and women arise—Ehud, and Deborah, and Barak, and Gideon—who display devotion to God unquenched in Israel, and rally the nation to

Jehovah. Even when very imperfect, the men are after the type of former heroes of faith. Then the drift is not in the main to degeneracy. Samuel comes forth an ideal character and leads Israel upwards. No, no! This is not a story of natural development up from Paganism, but the story of reaction from, and then restoration to, a great creative beginning which lay behind. The history cannot be understood on any other footing than that. We cannot leave the spiritual constituents out, if we would understand this history and its expression in literature. We must enter into the actions and reactions, the lofty possibilities, the disastrous declensions, of a nation standing in a solitary relation to God from the beginning, that it might be an example to the world.

And now, (5) the origins are fairly to be judged in the light of effects and outcomes.

Remember that we are dealing here from beginning to end with the conscious experiences of men. And we lay down as an all-inclusive rule that we may provisionally take for granted that, however obscure the origins of a religion may be, we may judge of their quality by that to which they work out.

In saying this we are simply affirming that all growths are true to their kinds. You cannot gather grapes of thorns and figs of thistles. If a movement is founded in selfishness, under every

disguise the selfish base will appear. Now, here the unbelieving critics are perfectly consistent. The outcome—Christianity—is in their view a natural growth, and they may consistently hold that the origins in Judaism are natural. The inconsistency lies with those who hold the Divine origin and revealed character of Christianity, and who would yet trace back Judaism to a slow natural growth up from the ground of ordinary heathen worship. But in this there is a great deal of intellectual confusion. Natural religion (beyond the instinctive sense of Deity with which there is evidence that all religions began) is a projection of man's own mind, an attempt to shadow forth dim and perverted instincts. Mythology is a disease of thought. Writers go on the assumption of Jehovah being a tribal God, as if *He grew*; whereas what developed was only man's knowledge of Him. There is no gradual transition from these dreams of alien and self-centred man to the veritable Divine, coming down into human life with His own holy will, setting at nought the thoughts of man, leaving no place for them, seeking to lift man to converse, and to fill him with His Spirit. The idea of a slow development up from one level to the other is an absurdity. Whenever God came, under whatever primitive forms, He came from His own Divine centre, distinct, divine, individual, to put an end to the false dreams of

man. Therefore the fair and proper assumption on which to go, till facts disprove it, is that if there be a real revelation from God in the culmination, Christianity, religion will have been on that level from the beginning in Judaism.

Of course, these five rules are mere tentative sketches of canons such as we are assured dispassionate critics must lay down, if they are to arrive at the exact truth regarding such a literature as that of the Old Testament. They may be imperfectly drawn, unwisely expressed, defective possibly, or possibly redundant; still, they are a beginning. Criticism when dealing with Scripture is not engaged in an academic question, but in a study which affects very powerfully sacred human interests. It should not toy with such problems in absence of the main factors making for a conclusion. What we want is truth, fact, reality in relation to the external history of this literature, whose contents have brought life to the world; and it is our interest, as practical men, to see that no orders of fact are left out of view which can contribute to a rational and truly reliable conclusion.

## VII

### THE TRUE ORDER AND PROGRESSION OF HEBREW HISTORY

Rev. xix. 10: "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

WITH profound gratitude to God we put our hands to the last chapter of this volume, which has been prepared, from month to month, under an accumulation of other cares even more than ordinarily burdensome. We have been discussing in these past chapters an artificial order imposed upon Old Testament Scripture, whose inadequacy has been exposed at many points, and whose foreignness to the spirit of revelation has abundantly appeared. Now, by way of conclusion, we desire briefly to discover and unfold the true order lying imbedded in the Old Testament, and the principle of progression as discovered in the relation of the several books.

Of course, this can only be done by way of suggestion, and by inference from the distinctive doctrine of revelation which we have enunciated in these chapters. Taking into account the spiritual side of revelation in the way we suggested in last chapter, sound and accurate critics must yet deal

with each part in detail, fixing, so far as possible, the date, authorship, etc., of each psalm and book and, it may be, fragment. We purpose showing, in stay of judgment, and as indicating the reversals, of the critical view, which are sure to ensue when the present hypothesis is set aside, how much may be said in general terms for the Biblical order as it at present stands, and especially what a profound continuity marks that progression of life, institution, literature, represented in the Old Testament as it has come down supported by tradition from pre-Christian times.

There is one thing about the higher criticism which we thoroughly appreciate—the attempt to introduce the scientific spirit, the attempt to vindicate its view of Scripture, at the broad bar of history and the world's judgment. We believe that we have in Scripture the truth about God, the absolute fundamental truth, of which all other truths, physical, biological, intellectual, moral, are aspects or subordinate manifestations. Therefore, whether dealing externally with the text, or internally with the truth, we ought to present it as that which has affinity with all the thinkings of man, and can vindicate itself at the bar of universal reason.

But in doing this we are not to make light of the spiritual, in order to give first place and full scope to the natural. The spiritual stands on its



own feet, is a constituent of experience, as much as the material, and must be studied by the laws which it discovers, and in the light which it brings. In the moral, which is a schoolmaster to bring men to God, in the universal, inextinguishable sense of God, we see that there is a whole side of man which fronts God and which thirsts for communion with Him. And more, in coming into conscious life through Christ, the spiritual has exerted such influence upon individual character and social and public movements that it can neither be discounted nor dismissed. We need not fear to assert for the spiritual, and for God's discovery of Himself to man's spirit, all which they can rightfully claim. That is not sectarianism, but going for the whole truth. If men will ignore one side of experience and all that belongs to it, if they will insist on explaining the whole by the half, they must be left to be confronted by their insoluble enigmas and impaled on their flagrant inconsistencies.

Because we insist, however, that the unique element in Scripture is to be fully and fairly allowed for, we by no means admit that we are shutting up the Church to a forced and unnatural view. Rather do we confidently affirm that not until we take full account of all the facts pertaining to Old Testament literature, can we discern the original and highly characteristic development from within of a living revelation. Every order

of facts has a development characteristic of itself. First come the mechanical processes of dead matter. Then we have development on a new plane, in plants and animals, from a life centre, and by laws peculiar to organic beings. Although there have been loud boasts to that effect, there is no resolving the higher kind of development into the lower. Then, across a still wider gulf, you have development of sensation and intelligence on a plane so manifestly distinct, and by processes so irremovably separate from the material, that Herbert Spencer frankly admits that the causes by which physical processes like motion and light are changed into the mental experience of sound and visions are "mysteries which it is not possible to fathom."<sup>1</sup>

Now, just as among evolutionists in the field of natural science a strong effort has been made to reduce all existence to an affair of mechanics, so critics have begun by endeavouring to reduce the Old Testament to a level and a kind of development lower than that to which it belongs. Therefore, to all the assertions made by eminent men (some of which we quoted in Chapter V.), that theirs is the view which presents the natural development of Israel, we say:—By no means; yours is an alien theory forced from without on an order of facts belonging to a wholly different level

<sup>1</sup> "First Principles," p. 217.

than that from which you reason, and animated by principles and forces in the boldest contrast to those which you gratuitously assume.

The whole false progress comes from confounding things that differ. We believe that, clearer or more obscure, there is a witness of God in every man, and such revelation in nature that the invisible things of God from the creation of the world, even His eternal power and Godhead, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made.<sup>1</sup> So from time to time, even amid the dark of heathenism, great souls have reached out to fragmentary views and ideals that had a certain moral uplifting for longer or shorter periods. All these, however, whatever their arresting power for a season, have not hindered the collapse of ancient and modern heathenism. What we have in Scripture, even in the Old Testament, given "at sundry times and in divers manners," is on a totally different plane.

As life came in, to make a new world of vegetable and animal existences and activities, in the silent spaces of dead matter; as a self-conscious mind awoke in man, and through intelligence got dominion over the creatures, that he might turn the properties of nature to ends of physical, intellectual, moral, and spiritual culture; so, crowning all, God who is a Spirit comes in to make Himself

<sup>1</sup> Romans i. 20.

known to the intelligences whom He has made, and to draw them into free, conscious, loving submission to Himself.

That is the self-witness of Scripture in the Old Testament, as in the New. It never moves from that ground of a self-revelation of God, demanding obedience as the condition of all fellowship and happiness. It speaks from a plane of its own consistently from beginning to end, and it brings to light the peculiar facts in human life to which it makes appeal. Is not that a sufficiently notable fact to take account of, that from the beginning of recorded history to the first, and possibly the second, century of the Christian era, writings should appear at irregular periods, and in widely sundered ages, which, amid varieties of form and innumerable minor diversities, are all written from one standpoint (and that alone in the world) of an actual and glorious revelation by God to Israel? And have we not an advance even upon that notable fact in this, that when brought together by other men in a late age they cohered, not merely in a unity, but in the progression of a Divine purpose, from age to age?

From all that we find in lower fields then, we should expect that in a revelation occupying so exceptional and exalted a standpoint we should have a principle of development from within, quite characteristic and peculiar to itself. And, as

throughout this chapter we shall be careful to show, this is really the case.

In last chapter we tried to realise Moses working back from the standpoint of Sinai into the earlier history, and lifting into light the prior steps of God's manifestation. We saw what a wonderful fragment of history that is, and how fully the earliest portions, which might seem farthest removed from actual proof, are supported by documents recently discovered, and by universal traditions of the human race.

But there was one prime portion of this narrative which we did not touch, and which is simply of immense importance for the position which we have taken up. We ask you to look at the place given to the story of the Fall. In our judgment that is conclusive as to the Old Testament's being a revelation moving out from a Divine centre having to do with man's relation to the living God even from the beginning. Evolution which has to do with matter and force can have no cognisance of such an event—the withdrawal of a free, self-conscious spirit from the living God. The nearest it can reach is in its doctrines of degeneration and reversion to type. The universal traditions of the race have their stories manifold of the Fall, jumbled up with the other stories in one undistinguished mass.

But look at the place which the narrative of

the Fall has in the Book of Genesis. It is the pivot of the history of humanity. Does not this show that in the dawn of human history there was the most vivid sense of man's relation to God, and of God's very positive and declared revelation to man? Does not the writer, whom we may fairly take to be Moses, since the critical hypothesis is for us discredited, discover the keenest appreciation of these facts? Men were not, as the development theory would have it, rising through the rudest types of savage belief, but, as the earliest writings of China and India, Babylon and Egypt, show, were nearer the truth of God than later ages. And in this writing, which on every ground takes supremacy of all these, we go further and see the whole history of man hingeing on his relation to the living God, and passing under shadow and eclipse through disobedience. That is the majestic level of this revelation at the start, and it moves on that level to the end. It is a book which at no point touches the mere level of human disquisitions. It is occupied in describing the activity of God in relation to that Fall, in order to the uprise in Christ, with the related human history of faith and unbelief, of action and reaction. Where were the eyes of the critics, where were their hearts, when they presumed to hack and hew this living Divine whole into fragments that might be pieced into a poor story of natural evolution?

That is the plane of Scripture. It pursues the history of man at this level. It looks at every fact in this one steady light. Circumstances are of prime moment in its view which are of no importance from the standpoint of secular history, while vast areas of secular history are passed by without a murmur. Geologists tell us of the traces of a great deluge; they appreciate a physical fact. But in the view of Scripture it has a separate meaning—the salvation of the race at the cost of a generation; the blotting out of those who, despite their mighty physical energies, had forfeited life by having died to the one meaning and end of life; and the preservation of one family in whom the lamp of godly fear burned. Not only did holiness and unspeakable reverence for the Divine reign in those who could thus conceive of temporary or recent history, but the ageless Spirit of Him with whom they dwelt must have been moving upon their spirits, stirring instinctive convictions the full scope of which they could not discern, waking thoughts greater than they knew.

Let men not theorise about revelation and bring all sorts of outside learning to the Book from which to fashion forth an artificial theory: let them read, let the Word sink into their minds, let the breath of God in the whole impregnate their spirits; and then, when they let their in-



most natures utter what they have felt, however they may express themselves, their judgments cannot be far from what we have described. Upon every portion of these Scriptures there are the hall-mark and the signature of God.

And as we go on, the signs increase. In God's advancing purpose, great catastrophes are storms which clear the air and usher in the possibility of better things. Now we want you to note one of the wider correspondences of revelation.

As every great architect has his traits recurring in the most unexpected places, reappearing at this and that far-sundered point of his structure, so with the Great Architect. How silently life moved in on the inorganic world! By what slow and tentative efforts mind rose up and began the subduing of the forces of nature, which has gone to such lengths to-day! Remember also, to rise into a very different sphere, how, when in the dense forest of the pre-Christian world only tokens were heard of rotting and decay, the angel of the Lord appeared to Zacharias about the time of the evening sacrifice—the first velvet footfall of the new era of redemption.

In strictest consonance with all this, the note of a new beginning broke upon Abram in Haran. In proceeding along this line, we are perfectly conscious of what many will say. They have been going on the huge, unjustifiable assumption that only hard

material facts and forces can be counted scientific. But that is becoming out-of-date. The spiritual is real—there is no getting rid of that. As truly as there is a region of man which fronts the external world, viz., the five senses, there is another region which fronts God, which can enter into converse with God, derive personal qualities therefrom which can nowhere else be found, and produce social and political effects on the world indisputable. We are not going to allow this presumption any more. Of course, we are not going to take every vagrant dream or outflow of feeling as a manifestation of the spiritual. We must have tests for spiritual as for physical facts. But when these are applied, the workings of spiritual laws and forces are to be allowed for like any other.

To return. In strict consonance with the Divine method in all other cases, the note of a new beginning broke upon Abram at Haran: "Get thee out of thy country . . . to a land that I will show thee." The higher criticism is a destroyer of personalities. They have pulverised the most outstanding individualities of sacred history. He in whose hands our hopes are, however, loves the individual, selects the individual, plants His seed-thought slowly to germinate in a human nature, amid the actions and reactions of a great soul, fosters and directs the dawning resolve, until

the solitary becomes the man of destiny, and the world rings with his name.

In form even, the story of Abram has the stamp of truth. Thus by movements on the minds of individuals has God inaugurated all great spiritual beginnings. And the contents confirm the impression. This is not the kind of story that a poet or novelist, working up a myth into a personal history, could ever have written. What we have shown to be the distinguishing spirit of Scripture permeates warp and woof. Every incident save a few human reactions moves out from the centre of the Divine Will, and is touched by the ordering Spirit of God in every line. This is a story which has awakened a response in spiritual natures in every generation since, and which by accuracy and depth of insight has instructed innumerable millions from age to age. Spiritual methods are discovered there, laws and processes of the life with God are outlined in that old story, rooted to begin with in a material promise, but widening and heightening under Divine discipline, till at last around the altar of sacrifice something of God's purpose in Christ glimmered before the patriarch in that far-off time.

This, it would seem, is the kind of story which any vagrant imagination could put together out of facts and myths! It will be to the undying discredit of the higher criticism that ever it could

have thought so. Critics have taken a totally inadequate view of the distinguishing glory of the spiritual. Because, when God has made Himself known in His Son, the spiritual can work powerfully in very common persons, ambitious scholars thirsting for reputation look down upon it as ordinary and undistinguished, whose existence in any age may be supposed without explanation, or denied without questioning, whenever it suits an intellectual theory. But they are on far holier ground than they know. The spiritual, as we have it in Scripture, has never dawned in any heart save by the direct action of God. The very existence of the spiritual as a force in human life, is an indication that God has come into contact with humanity in some declaration of His will, and that that life has responded to the will of God. The story of Abraham—and the same is true of the other patriarchs—is on the very level which we have found to mark out revelation from the beginning.

II. Thus we have pointed out the distinguishing level and quality of revelation. Let us now point out its law of progress.

Having in the course of these chapters moved around and constantly returned to the Mosaic Age and the creative beginning associated therewith, we shall assume what has already been laid down, and go on to show, in contrast to the

artificial hypothesis which we have dismissed, the true principle of progression manifest in the history of Israel. So far from being mechanical, so far from yielding to the superior merit of the critical hypothesis, to everyone who has any spiritual perception it is immeasurably superior, introducing no unknown and highly doubtful elements, true to spiritual law and individual experience, and such as has appealed even to the common conscience in all ages.

The shadow of the Fall lies along Old Testament Scripture. God is coming forth to deal in His own love and grace with His people. He sovereignly chose them, He admitted them into covenant with Himself. This was of sheer love and grace, despite their unworthiness. And having bound them by love, and thrilled them by overwhelming manifestations of Himself, He sought at Sinai to place them under a discipline by which they might be brought into fellowship. Now, after the efforts of a hundred years to break up the legislation of the Pentateuchal books, and represent it as a late collection of oral laws, we wish to utter what is not a mere private opinion, but the settled conviction of a great host, that the unity of this legislation and its immediate relation to the theophany at Sinai, as the occasion of its promulgation, are more than ever apparent.

Take the living centre of that legislation in the

Decalogue. As the rays falling on and reflected from the earth are to the sun, being emanations and expressions of the central orb, the Decalogue is the impact and application to human relations of this holy, searching, loving revelation. Every word goes like a divine throb into the heart of the then existing situation. So far from belonging, as Wellhausen thinks, to a later age, the Commandments never could have been uttered with a tithe of their appropriateness at any other time. Think of the Jewish people come out of Egypt from the polytheism and military absolutism of that land, their fetters broken, and standing in God's free air under the mountain peaks of Sinai. The first word is a ring fence round the covenant nation: "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." The second word reaches further, and separates the very soul of heathen worship from that of the only True. The heathen gods were projections of the Egyptians' own minds, which they tried to image forth in their own fashion. But the Great Jehovah had come forth to them to reveal Himself to and in them. So all imaginings of their own were to be far removed: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image"—think of the cat-gods, the hawk-gods, the bull-gods—"or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath."

Need we go further to show how occasion and

law fit into each other? But let us run rapidly through them. The gods which men make they can abuse. Travellers in Egypt can discern that the gods are pale shadows beside the human personalities. But the living Eternal One had come forth to Israel, had chosen them for Himself, and unspeakable reverence must fill their souls: "Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain."

But not now for the first time had this holy, solitary Lord God been manifested. He had given man the Sabbath at creation, and it had lived as a tradition among themselves. Coming now into clearer and more positive relations, He re-affirms this old ordinance, and gives it a place among the conditions of His covenant with them: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." Does not the reader feel, as we go on, that the horizons of Sinai are round these transactions?

Higher laws and relations do not supersede lower; they exalt them, and surround them with new sanctions. The race was rooted in a family, the kingdom sprang from a family, and for the kingdom's sake the special sanctions of God surrounded the family: "Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

Then, since they were sons of the kingdom, life was doubly precious: "Thou shalt not kill."



Next in sacredness to life was life's central relation: "Thou shalt not commit adultery."

Then only was account taken of man's possessions. As necessary for the fulfilling of God's will they were to be regarded as sacred: "Thou shalt not steal."

But in a chosen people, witnesses for God before the world, there was something else of great preciousness—their good name. The sanction of God went round that also: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour."

And now, crowning all, comes a command truly remarkable. We cannot conceive of its being placed in the Decalogue except on the understanding of their being under an overwhelming sense of God as at Sinai. They were His, to stand in their lot and to live their lives in relation to Him. They must not go hankering after things which He had not appointed them, for that would mean the annihilation of the covenant so far as they were concerned: "Thou shalt not covet."

Surely the relations between the creative movement and these creative words are very close. But it may be well to travel further, and show in relation to the legislation of Leviticus how it also fits in to the revelation of Sinai. According to the critical view, this book as it stands is a late product of the period ushering in and including the Exile. A series of sacrifices and ritual obser-

vances which had gradually grown up in Israel are gathered up, wrought into a system, and informed with a loftier ethical spirit.

But the more we examine the book, in detail and in the whole, the more impossible seems this solution. Every fragment is permeated by a spirit wholly separate and distinct from rituals framed by priestly schools. The book is on a different plane. There is an awful sense of God, and of the reality of sin. Even the priests who stood between men and God had themselves to be prepared for office by sin-offering and burnt-offering. Each individual sacrifice in its place, and the whole system of sacrifice crowned by the great Day of Atonement, betray such a sense of the holiness of Jehovah and of the need of complete separation from sin as could never have sprung up in the practice of a heathen people, or have been put together by human genius, however great, impelled by mere patriot instinct to glorify the beginnings of his race.

This book stands on the same superhuman level as the story of the Fall, and indeed the previous books. We are not on the heathen level of imagined Deities, and man-devised ritual. God Himself has at last come forth to bring estranged man into relation to Himself. And in this book we have the sacrificial and ritual discipline through which Israel, despite unworthiness, might come

into and maintain covenant relations with the living God. This is not the work even of Moses, but of God. In those long communions on Sinai, he entered into the Divine thought, and brought down a book level to the simple and barbarous conditions of the people, but instinct with a Divine presence which none but God could impart.

When we study this book from the standpoint of Sinai, and consider it as imposed upon a people in the first stages of moral and spiritual education, we are moved to say, "How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."<sup>1</sup> The covenant which God made with Israel at Sinai breathes through the book. These are the sacrifices by which they may come into His presence. Thus may they live acceptably before Him. In the first sixteen chapters we read how Israel may enter into fellowship. That this was designed to be very real and thorough, we learn on every page. The tracking of sin into every secret crevice, discovered in the first seven chapters, shows that in all ages God has been ever the same. In that early day, and under a system of symbols, He desired truth in the inward part even as in the full light of the Gospel of Christ. Then all approach was to be through a way of His own appointment, by those whom He had

<sup>1</sup> Genesis xxviii. 17.

chosen and set apart as He ordained. To enjoy this they must be clean in their eating, in their family life, in the congregation, because God had chosen them for Himself. And lest even with all this holy separating discipline, uncleanness might remain, on the great Day of Atonement the high priest offered sacrifice for himself and all the people.

Who could have conceived a scheme like that, fitting in on the one hand to the Bible view of man's fall, and on the other to that perfect teaching regarding sin and its sacrifice to be found in the New Testament?

And the same deep sense of this being the thought and appointment of God pervades the second part. True, it descends into many apparently trivial and even repulsive details. Manifestly, the people being dealt with are rude, primitive, impulsive sons of nature, lacking the smoothing influences of town or civilised life. Yet, as we read commands about killing oxen, and gleaning vineyards, and bearing grudges, and seeking after wizards, our spirits are touched with an exceeding reverence. If on the one hand God stoops to every minute condition of their lives, it is to show that within these they must live as unto Him. "Ye shall do My judgments and keep Mine ordinances, to walk therein: I am the Lord your God."<sup>1</sup> "Ye shall be holy

<sup>1</sup> Leviticus xviii. 4.

unto Me: for I the Lord am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be Mine."<sup>1</sup>

In this spirit does the second part deal with personal holiness, holiness in the family, in social relations, in the priesthood, in the feasts, in the use of the land; the blessings following thereon, and the law regarding vows beyond legal requirement. If a book could testify to the conditions within which it arose and the historic source of its inspiration, this book in every detail and general structure testifies to such a day of Divine revelation as Exodus describes. The theophany on Sinai justifies the legislation; the legislation supports the creative character of the Mosaic dispensation. These correspondences are so inward and far-reaching, and speak so profoundly to what is deepest and most unchanging in man, that they are not so easily set aside. What are the alleged discrepancies between Deuteronomy and the legislation in the earlier books, which are superficial and only assume importance from the critical view, to those central and all-embracing correspondences which, like the advancing arms of an iron bridge, meet on a far loftier than natural level—the very level which revelation maintains from the outset till now?

III. The law of progress in revelation, then, is

<sup>1</sup> Judges xx. 26.

is a national movement forward from a Divine beginning. Jehovah sovereignly brings Israel into friendship with Himself, discovers a gracious purpose in relation to the nation, and invests them with a moral and sacrificial discipline by which they may fulfil His purpose. From this creative centre begins a covenant history, in constant contact with God; unless in so far as they sin His grace and favour away, when they sink to the natural level and display the reactions of the flesh.

Now, if the reader reflects, he will see that with such exceptional conditions we cannot have an ordinary natural development. But we have a development so original, characteristic, and typical of all progress in the sphere of the spiritual, that it stands forth real, incontestable fact in the vividness of its own presentation. Not a man in Israel would have dared, not the greatest genius the world has ever known would have had the ethical insight, to conceive the lights and shadows of this onward progress. This is the finger of God, the searching of the Divine Spirit, the work of Him Whose name is "I am that I am," who was discovering in all His actions to His people, what He is in Himself.

Let us move on these lines of advance as rapidly as possible. The reader will have noticed that we have never once employed the term Hexateuch.

That is a modern coinage, unsupported by tradition, and with only a theoretical justification. The grouping handed down from antiquity is not six-fold but five-fold,—the Pentateuch,—while “Joshua” is joined to the books that follow; and if one can only get delivered from the glamour of the critical movement, this arrangement will seem self-evident. The Pentateuch is the narrative of the Divine self-communication, where with a God-like breadth, against the background of earlier Divine manifestations, the lines are laid of a whole economy or dispensation. This Divine programme needs no other fence than its own sublimity. “Joshua” is an effect, a detail, the story of the Old Testament Bayard, “without fear and without reproach,” securing the fulfilment of one covenant promise. The inspiration of the book, called by his name, is the covenant history which went before. It is so interlocked with the Pentateuch, refers so continually to Moses, his personality, his commands, and ordinances, contains allusions so unmistakable to all parts of the legislation, recites in such detail the earlier history, renews so impressively the covenant with God in the passover at the Jordan valley, and in the reading and recording of the law at Shechem, that you can only get rid of the testimony to the preceding books by pulverising them both.

If we take the Pentateuch in its true character



one could not conceive a more fitting sequel than this book of Joshua. Signs of reversion are not wanting. Joshua's ominous fears of what the future may bring are significant of what he has seen in the people's spirit and temper. They are held in check, however, by a blameless personality, in whom were perpetuated much of the vision, faith, and self-sacrifice of Moses, and, with warlike gifts of his own, superb loyalty to his master's ideals. The stirring work of conquest, too, especially when informed by the lofty consecration of their leader and the powerful presence of God, had a lifting and sustaining influence of its own. That vanished, however, they fell back into heathen practices and forsook the Lord God of their fathers. And in that wild reversion to idolatry in which they served Baalim and Ashtaroth, the whole moral and ceremonial system of Sinai, which only had meaning and validity for those who realised their covenant with God, sank for a time out of sight.

We cannot follow the critics into all their misconceptions here. They cannot away with the idea that this was a fall from a loftier height. No, this was the real savage condition from which Israel slowly emerged. We frankly admit that at this period there seemed at times little to choose between Israel and surrounding nations. The critical theory certainly explains the barbarism and the

savagery. But that does not amount to much. As men are in this world, it is the easiest of all easy things for a people to run down hill. Every age to our own has had proof, sad enough, of reversion to brutality—horrid cruelty. The difficult things to account for are the steps upward from that degenerate condition. These never come of themselves, without an adequate lifting force. Now here the critical theory entirely fails. If Israel was on the level of surrounding heathen nations, whence came the regenerative forces unknown among all other peoples? These are the features to be explained. Whence the stirrings of an exceptional reverence for the unseen God? Whence the mighty uprising of faith in His presence and power,—men and women like Gideon and Deborah attaining to a moral stature unknown outside of Israel, and akin to that of Moses, Joshua, and the patriarchs of old? How happened it that the multitudes who had sunk back to heathen levels recollected themselves, and rose up into some measure of vision, faith, and power, which made them resistless over those who had crushed them, while the spell of their leader continued?

There is no explanation save one—their peculiar past. They had inherited traditions; they, as their fathers, had gone through experiences which, whether individually they heard

or forebore, had burned into their souls. They could not divest themselves of their unique destiny or of their covenant relations and promise. What if it was of God, to permit the covenant transaction of Sinai to get overlaid and buried almost out of sight, by the temporary resurgence of every instinct and tendency of depraved human nature, to let it be seen that everything was to be of Him, and nothing at all of man? That they should fall back to half-heathen conceptions of worship is not wonderful. But the wonderful circumstances, needing exceptional causes to account for them, were these, that life and faith and the power of recuperation survived, that by successive steps the people reasserted their faith in God, that out of utter eclipse the consciousness of being the covenant people of God grew up spontaneously in Israel, and that they moved on by slow stages to the realisation, step by step, of the covenant nation, the theocratic king, and finally the divinely-appointed worship.

Compared with such a history as that, so real, so level to human experience, so instinct with the frailty and sin of men, and the overcoming grace of God, all the criticisms of our opponents are external and poor. Their theory of history is mechanical in the highest degree. When institutions are set up they should, irrespective of circumstances, start right away. Critics do not

take account of the outstanding facts, the universal heathen environment in other nations, the magnificence of God's claim, the height of His requirements, the possibilities of reaction proportionate to that height. Why, the very circumstances to which they point, as proof positive of the impossibility of the traditional view, are the chief signs that the historical books from Joshua to Samuel are on the same spiritual level with the earlier books, and are inspired with the same superhuman aim and breath of revelation. Man has fallen and God has discovered Himself, that from all wandering He might bring the people back to Himself. That man in his rebellion should make havoc of God's gracious provisions is nothing wonderful. But that, despite all, God should root Himself in His fickle people, and lead them on so far to the realisation of His ideal, that is the marvel which makes this Book in every part, histories no less than prophecies, stand alone in the world.

IV. We come now to a most significant section, the frustration of the simply national ideal. True, to those like ourselves who can look back on this era from the standpoint of the completed history, it is possible to discern beneath the surface of very real present *failure*, in the disruption of the kingdom and consequent decay, the setting of a great new current of Divine purpose, which none

of those who lived through the era could discern. Just as through the bare branches of the trees in winter we can catch far glimpses that were hid all summer through by the leafy screen, so in the withering and breaking up of the first partial fulfilment of promise in the Davidic kingdom can we see new reaches of Divine design. Failure and disintegration are the occasions of bringing into view an ineffably larger hope, in which God is seen sublimely working on the lines which He had laid down from the beginning.

It will be quite impossible to follow the history of rupture and collapse, till Israel is carried captive, and then at long last, Judah is crushed, her people deported, her temple destroyed. And in pursuing details we might lose the principle of progression. All through this era of disintegration and decay the purpose of God was going on, because we find not only select souls, but the people to whom they spoke, re-emerging in the prophetic era on a loftier plane of vision.

We select then one episode, the life of Solomon, in whom the nation reached its crown, and by whom it was led down towards rupture and subsequent ruin. Here we shall see, on a great scale, how God's purpose goes on through ages of decay, as through ages of fulfilment, despite failure and relapse, as well as through faith and sacrifice, how His thoughts are orbiting, some glimpses of

His will are entering into human minds amid conflicts and baffling mysteries, no less than in the sunshine of His love. In all, He is above those with whom He fulfils His designs, working to ends of which they little dream.

As we have already hinted, the higher criticism has been a ruthless wrecker of the outstanding personalities of Israel, by whose distinctive impress Scripture has chiefly lived in the thought and reverence of the great masses of men. Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, Solomon, Isaiah, Daniel—these have a more commanding place among the worthies of the human race than any classical heroes. Yet all of them have been either dissolved into myths, or so shrunken and diminished as to be indiscernible. Of none of them is this truer than of the magnificent personality of Solomon. By his errors no less than by his excellencies, as summing up the past and preparing for the disintegration of the future, he occupies a place of singular interest in the evolution of God's purpose as we have it in the Old Testament. In opening this, however slightly, we shall see the immeasurable superiority, in insight, originality of conception, and truth to fact, of the traditional to the critical view.

Of such an era as that stretching from Sinai to Zion, from Moses to David, with its immense crises, dark and bright, subjecting to the severest

strain every passion and aspiration of the soul, there must have been further literary expression than the song of Deborah and the dirges for Saul and Abner. The fact that there were these raises the strongest presumption that there were more. And, the critical hypothesis discredited, there is no reason why we should not accept the testimony of tradition with regard to the existence of Davidic psalms. Sages too fertilised in spirit by the moral discipline of law and sacrifice would be striking out in proverb or aphorism their judgments of conduct and maxims of prudence. Stirred in their whole being,—intellect as well as heart,—Jothams would be finding delight in imaginative creation, and huge Samsons in intellectual puzzles. In a word, as in every instance known to us through succeeding ages, religious upheaval has been followed by intellectual illumination, so must it have been away back at the beginning in Israel.

And thus the fitting culmination and crown of this age was a many-sided genius like Solomon, gathering up and bringing to full utterance, all the strivings in the nation through the past, crystallising their ethical wisdom, the lyrical joy of faith, delight in the work of God's hands; and able to express, too, in organisation and edifices their utmost ideas of a theocratic kingdom.

But in this imperfect state of being, to have realised an ideal means readiness to go beyond it.



And even through his failures and errors Solomon helped towards that. With all his magnificent qualities, Solomon was not a hero of faith like David. He asked God for the gift of wisdom that he might rightly administer the kingdom. But when, later, God demanded from him full surrender, to be His hand and instrument as David was,<sup>1</sup> Solomon was dumb. He would not "walk before God" to do according to all His commands, but must guide so far his own course. His largeness of sympathy brought him into affinity with the heathen nations, his breadth of wisdom, discerning "the soul of good in things evil," led him to join heathen worships to the worship of God. And so he went plunging down, as so many brilliant intellects have done, which have refused submission to God. As soon as the breath was out of his body the kingdom was broken in twain, and in both the down grade began.

Will it be counted unpardonable if, without presuming to forestall sound criticism, we suggest that very much more has to be said for the traditional view of the books associated with Solomon's name, than has for many years been allowed? We have no right to assert, but any one may put in a caveat in arrest of judgment. Under the fascination of a baseless theory, it has seemed a wise thing to carry down a book like Ecclesiastes to a

<sup>1</sup> See 1 Kings ix. 4.

date when similar speculations were known outside ; to allow in the Song of Solomon nothing but what appears on the surface, and account it a story or drama of natural love ; and to describe the Proverbs as a collection gradually formed and issued late. The conception of a natural development in Israel, not fundamentally dissimilar from that of other nations, has been a determining element in all these conclusions.

If we accept the self-witness of revelation, however, if we grant the true order and progression to be as we have described—inward, spiritual, dynamical, according to the guiding of a Divine hand—a new set of considerations comes into play. We recover these books in whole or in part for the illustration of this sublime personality, and, more, as having their place in the unfolding of God's purpose in revelation. The effect is like what happens to an architect, when, removing a coat of whitewash,—he recovers an ancient fresco, some portrait of Dante, some masterpiece of Giotto or Orcagna. What are the surface theorisings of the critics to the lighting up of the sombre tragedy of an imperial soul, like that of Solomon, held but wandering, marvellously responsive to the spiritual while succumbing to the flesh, never cast off but permitted, on account of disobedience, to sail round every dark coast of doubt and despair?

Without denying that there may be other collec-

tions in Proverbs, we must not overlook one of the most significant writings of Scripture—the portraiture of Wisdom. Here we have the Hebrew genius arrived at the stage of self-reflection, realising what the presence of a covenant God in Israel meant. And everything seems to suit Solomon—the wide horizon, including nature and human life, the importance given to knowledge, and even the partial detachment of his life, illumined by God, yet not fully surrendered to Him. To his imperial nature, in calm survey, the peculiar nearness of God to His people, with the quickened sense of life and duty springing therefrom, seems to blend with and interpret God's universal government. The soul of things, the informing wisdom animating all, seems to stand forth less like an attribute than like a person with whom Jehovah held converse. The thought of God in revelation is opening out toward the larger conception, Trinity in unity, that was to come. Jehovah is becoming self-revealed in His own work.

Surely we have here a proof of a superhuman overruling mind in Scripture—God moving forward through long centuries, not only in the evolution of His purpose of grace, but in the broadening vision of Himself caught by select spirits of the race.

If we may be permitted to pause and step aside for a moment from the course of our exposition, this enriched vision of God on the intellectual side is

balanced by another in the region of personal spiritual experience. The book of Job is no clever speculation, but an inseparable part of the Old Testament revelation, and the profoundest reflective utterance of the Hebrew spirit in covenant with God. Moses taught that obedience would be crowned with God's favour. The narrow particularistic Jewish spirit inferred therefrom, that misfortune and suffering implied the anger of God, and therefore the ill-desert of the sufferer. This typical Greatheart—for that a personal experience underlies this book is beyond question—warring with an inadequate view, rose not by argument but by the waves of an anguished spirit to a finer and broader vision. After falterings and fears he comes to see God, not only as One who stood for His own sovereign claim, but as having by Him one who would put Himself in the place of the creature, say everything for him that could be said, so that even the greatest sufferer could rest in confidence that right would be done. Is not this a living literature, moving on under the influence of unparalleled forces—the Self-discoveries of God, the soaring faith and vision of holy men?

To return, however, to those books which cluster around Solomon's name. The Song of Solomon is, we are convinced, even yet an unsolved enigma. Certainly the naturalistic interpre-

tations have not met the facts of the case. There is a blending of opposites which they cannot account for, the language and images of undiluted passion, and yet with these, stainless purity. The ancient instinct was right : we have got some ideal element here.

Many years ago, in reading the *Vita Nuova* of Dante, and entering into the moving expressions of an ideal passion, the thought flashed on our mind that here lay some clue to the origin of the Song. Solomon lived in a love-laden Oriental atmosphere. He had drunk to the full all that the pagan East had to give in this form of ravishment. Sated and self-reproachful, one can fancy him turning back with a great leap of revived love, from the neighbouring empires with whose heathen fashions he dallied, to austere Judah and Israel, rude and simple compared with these—black but comely. The purer breath of their faith and devotion braces him. At their heart there is a tenser love, a loftier passion. Their great past, and the quenchless love of the Holy One for His chosen, come back—the heroic days when people and Lord were knit into one. Here were embraces, passion, the gloating of loving eyes, the endearments of speech which did not enervate but brace, cast down but build up. And so we have on the basis of past history, and rising out of a real situation in the life of Solomon, the song of

Messiah and His beloved, which Bernard, and Rutherford, and the saints of all past ages believed it to be.

Sadly enough, however, that was but the fleeting inspiration of a day, and Solomon went plunging down into those excesses which, in the language of Burns, "harden a' within, and petrify the feeling." And so, love gone, passion dead, disillusion come, and faith, if not dead, in eclipse, Solomon entered into the wilderness of desertion and doubt, to look at the black mysteries of a life without God. Depend upon it, Ecclesiastes is no regular treatise—the work of a professed penman—but a human document, the soundings of a distraught soul—working up at last to a dim, hard faith as such an one might reach. Held of God in all his wanderings, never forsaken while putting the darkest meanings on life, he is seen reaching out amid the ashes of disillusion and the gloom of doubt to new accentuations of truth—the strait conditions of providence environing all life, man's superiority to his environment; "He hath set eternity in their heart," so that gleams of the illimitable mingle with all their seeing, and they cannot rest in the present; the wistful confidence in immortality, the certainty of personal judgment. Out of the gloom these lamps of light break, living and new, for Israel from the fiery discipline of God.

Go back to the beginning, behold the course of this unapproachable literature. On how lofty a plane it moves from first to last, what a holy searching spirit breathes through every Divine communication. And despite frailties and sins innumerable how wonderfully has the holy seed become the substance of a new covenant life, rising into manifold expressions of the soul, varied and sublime, as those which we have described! What human mind could have conceived such a literature? What imagination could have produced either the individual parts or the ideal combination of them? When taken in the full sense of its own contents the book is self-evidently from Him—through whatever instruments—from Him whose entrance into human history for pardon and salvation it so wonderfully describes.

One would desire to stop at this point, and resume in another chapter our exposition of the true order and progression of Hebrew history. But on many grounds we are compelled to gather up into a few closing sentences what remains of that survey.

If such has been the previous course of Old Testament revelations, if there has been so manifold an outblossoming of Hebrew thought and feeling under the discipline of God, we behold the adequate preparation for the extraordinary and unparalleled development of prophecy. The



passion for their history, the power of song, the play of imagination, the plumbings of ethical and spiritual thought, the conflict with mysteries, manifest in preceding writers, had supplied and braced the Hebrew spirit even for so great a task.

We feel too—all the more vividly because of the inadequate explanation of criticism—that the tremendous contrasts supplied by this mighty presence of God with His own, and yet the fearful ever-deepening declensions of Judah and Israel, supplied the situation out of which prophecy arose.

V. Let us look then at The Prophetic Renaissance. That there was an uprise at all from such a total collapse, shows that God had taken the grasp of His people which the earlier Scriptures describe. We are still on the same plane of man fallen, and God coming in with a purpose of deliverance. What strikes us in all these prophets is an over-mastering sense of God, which reduces every other fact, even the great world-empires rising upon their view, into insignificance. On the level of common human history there has never been anything like this. Then, pervading their teaching is the intense measureless conviction of God's having come into special relation to Israel, having chosen them for Himself, and given them a promise of world dominion. All this is

realised in faith as the purpose of God going out and covering all time. Such is the vast plane on which they move.

True, they were preachers of righteousness in their own day. But they searched into Israel's sins and read off the unerring moral judgments following on these, because they stood ever at God's standpoint, and looked at everything in the line of His purpose.

But however priceless and imperishable this ethical side may be, where God discovers for all time the unerring balances in which He tries nations, the most characteristic elements are the wonderful overflowings of love and grace, which could only have come from the heart of the eternal counsel, through these men wholly surrendered to His will. This is the side least looked at meantime; but beyond question prophecy culminates in these, and they burst to atoms the strait limits which moderns allow to the range of prophetic prevision. When God makes a man the channel of His eternal counsel, He speaks words which, of course, have a meaning and a reason to the man who utters them, but which also contain implications and expansions of significance which only after-ages, coming into the inheritance of the promise, can discern.

How those words of God to Moses have gone on enlarging their meaning, rising to loftier planes

of significance as the ages have rolled on—"Ye shall be a peculiar treasure to Me above all people, for all the earth is Mine."<sup>1</sup> These are the limitless horizons of prophecy. Only God can in the issue interpret fully what God has said. Let us not then presumptuously close the door, limiting Him who has broken all limits in carrying out His purpose of grace. Even to-day when we recognise the wonderful fulfilment of many prophetic words, we feel that the sketch of the eternal purpose outlined in prophetic words is only imperfectly filled in.

Their vision reaches forth to the furthest age. Amos sees after long ages of ruin and failure the tabernacle of David set up. Hosea, who so vividly realised Israel's whoredom and rejection, beholds her betrothed again in perfect renewal of love. Joel sees the kingdom widening to the bounds of the world, quickened and united to God by the fulness of the Spirit. Isaiah beholds the virgin's Son, the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Servant of Jehovah, the suffering Messiah, who should not fail until He had set judgment in the earth. Jeremiah, and still more Ezekiel, portray the new covenant of cleansing and renewal, in which the people shall realise at last their ideal, and the dry bones shall live. And Daniel, living amid heathen empires, sees the coming of the Son of Man, and

<sup>1</sup> Exodus xix. 5.

the founding of the Divine kingdom, in relation to the vast processions of the pagan empires: and, in his illumined judgment of the rapid course of these decaying force-empires, is led out to hint a time for the great consummation.

All these are fragments. One utters one thought and dies; another, in a different age, vouchsafes his glimpse and disappears. Not only is there no collusion, or even consultation, but these prophets were separated by broad barriers of age and conditions. Yet they resolve into so vast, many-sided, and harmonious a unity of Divine purpose.

Looking backwards, this historical miracle—for it is nothing less—is seen to be the marvellous, but wholly undreamt-of, expansion and realisation of that purpose of God which had been at work from Eden and Sinai, and all through the centuries since; Divine love coming in through the very sins and rebellion of His people, and leading out to the full disclosure of His vast purpose of grace.

And if there be such correspondences looking up the stream of time, what shall we say when, from the standpoint of prophecy we look forward to the fulfilment in Christ? All questions of human powers of forecast, and such like, are here swept aside. We are in presence of powers that are Divine. Coming forth from the unseen, moving

on his filial plane in utter originality of method and teaching especially as He proceeds to the fulfilment of His mission in death, resurrection, ascension, and indwelling, does our Lord discover, not after an earthly fashion, but in a manner lofty beyond expression, the most subtle and detailed correspondences of principle and provision with the whole course of past revelation.

These are realities, written so broad on the page of history that while they may be neglected they cannot be set aside. Such harmonies of plan did not arise by chance, such progressions of a positive purpose through the ages must have had a cause; and in the very nature of things there could have been no cause but the living God. No mind but His could have seen from beginning to end, could have impressed the spirit of the end on the very beginning, could have moved on the theatre of nations working out His designs; could, despite unbelief and self-will, have drawn human spirits to receive and reach out to express His thoughts, across the breadth of centuries and amid the rise and fall of empires; could have brought out these correspondences, like signs in heaven, to show that the Most High had been moving among the kingdoms of men. Nothing can explain such a unity of Scripture, such an order of parts and progression of events, rising to such a culmination, but one informing Divine

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presence, carrying out from beginning to end a creative purpose of His own. "It is He that sitteth on the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers."

If in any degree we have confirmed this faith in any soul, brought even a few from questioning to conviction, from theories of man to the vision of God, we shall count the labour of these past months, and the anxieties and difficulties attending all controversy, well repaid. May God of His great goodness forgive the faults and the failings of this weak endeavour, and accept this humble service of love and loyalty to His own most holy Name!

## “MODERN CRITICISM AND THE PREACHING OF THE OLD TESTAMENT”

WE have been asked, as a minister of religion, to express our conviction as to the bearing of the Higher Criticism on the preaching of the Old Testament.<sup>1</sup> This we do reluctantly, yet without any faltering of conviction. We believe that Dr George Adam Smith, and those whom he represents, are forcing upon the British Churches the gravest issue that any of them has had to face in living memory. Indeed, we might go further than that without exaggeration.

The thing which has astonished us most in his bright and clever book is what we have failed to find there, any discussion, or even mention, of the bearing of this criticism on the Protestant doctrine of the authority of Scripture. That lay abrupt and inevitable in his way. For the question is not whether out of this reconstructed Old Testament we can get materials for sermons. As authorised teachers of the Churches, we believe that we have a revelation from God of His sovereign purpose of mercy to mankind. In this modern day, jealous to irrationality of every assertion of authority, we assert this stupendous claim, commanding all men everywhere to repent. And that claim has been vindicated on two grounds: the ceaseless creation of living Christians, and the broad base in history on which revelation rests. Whatever undermines that historic base, then, weakens revelation, and takes something from the authority with which we can speak in the name of God to men.

The question is, then, Does criticism sustain, or does it in any measure break down, the unity and authority of revelation? In our view, it disintegrates the Old Testament, and to some extent affects the credit of the New. Surely in a religious or philo-

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted from the *British Weekly*, March 7, 1901.



sophic system, inherent testimony to its genesis and scope is of great value. Well, the man whom we account the greatest religious genius that the world has ever seen, the Apostle Paul, found it necessary to discover the relation of the earlier revelation, to that whose spiritual content, in so far as it affected the individual and the Church, he was honoured of God to unfold for all time. He lived nearly two thousand years nearer than we to the revelation whose history he explored. He was a son of that Jewish Church. He stood in the living currents of an as yet unextinguished nationality. He took time to cut his way through the dead deposits of tradition, and if he had not what Professor Smith calls "the finer instruments of criticism," he had what is of infinitely more value in seeking back to the roots of a living religious system, he had an intellectual genius that no show or seeming could elude, a sanctity that burned its way through human dreams into the revealed presence of God.

He there found the motive powers of Old Testament revelation, in the promise of God to Abraham, and His covenant with the people through Moses.<sup>1</sup> The whole upward movement started from these head-centres. Even the prophets, though they registered a significant advance, were less absolutely creative. They moved between the foci of promise in the far past, and fulfilment in the future. Now in this there is a judgment of the course which revelation pursued, embedded in the heart of the New Testament. And it is to be noticed that these are the parts of the Old Testament which criticism pulverises. Professor Smith tells us that there is a reaction of late in favour of admitting the personality of Abraham. But these old stories are late "efforts to account for the geographical distribution of neighbouring nations," with mayhap "a substratum of actual personal history." And then with a strange vivacity he adds, "But who wants to be sure of more? Who needs to be sure of more?" There is a character in French history who will live by a phrase. He precipitated the Franco-German

<sup>1</sup> Galatians iii.

War "with a light heart." No one appreciates more than we do the eager alert intellect and beautiful Christian spirit, in many directions, of Professor Smith. We would not injure him with a harsh thought, but he is dealing with a problem some aspects of which he does not consider, and with interests the most sacred in the world. His criticism may or may not be well founded, but it strikes at the unity of revelation, it annihilates the first creative step in that revelation, and discredits the judgment of Paul, which was that of all the Apostles and their Lord. And that makes all the difference in the world to a preacher of the Evangel of Christ.

But we recall the fact that Professor Smith allows a certain element of revelation in the Old Testament. He can only explain what he finds in the Old Testament on the supposition that "there was an authentic revelation of the one true God." That sounds decidedly comforting, but when we take pains to see what is meant our difficulties by no means disappear. An authentic revelation, how can that be? Moses, indeed, is conceded to have been a real person. His time was in some sort creative. But where is the valid authoritative discovery by God of Himself? We are told that we are not on historic ground here. We do not know that one divine utterance is genuine. Dr Smith confesses that the proof is most difficult. The most which he can say is that a personal influence of God on the history "is its most natural and scientific explanation."

That may be revelation, but not on the Christian or Jewish (as we have hitherto believed), but on a lower level—not God discovering Himself in a creative word, calling men into a new experience, starting a great historical progress; but rather like the dimmer vision caught in the mysteries of heathen faiths. And the whole treatment of revelation is on that line. "Israel looked to Jahweh as Moab looked to Chemosh," and, more remarkable still, the religion of Israel remained "before the age of the great prophets, not only similar to, but in all respects above mentioned identical with, the general Semitic religion,

which was not a monotheism, but a polytheism, with an opportunity for monotheism at the heart of it."

That is a picture of the elusive, uncertain character of this whole theoretical reconstruction. The only justification of it would be that the religious sense should at once recognise this as self-evidently the divinely original method of God's unveiling. The only thing, however, which it does satisfy is a current view of the growth and progress of religions. To the religious sense it betrays at once its external and artificial origin, while it leaves the genesis of the prophetic age a greater mystery than ever.

The truth is, the whole hypothesis is naturalistic. It grew up on that soil. And the attempt to introduce a duly toned-down and graduated presence and entrance of God into a naturalistic scheme is beyond the wit of man. God makes an absolute beginning. He starts on His own plane. He lifts to new levels and propels on new lines. And any created substitute for Him is a Dagon that may stand till the Ark of God come in, till a closer, more vivid sense of the presence of God fill a people, when, behold, it falls on its face—head and arms broken, and only the stump left of him.

But what if we have no option? That is Professor Smith's thought. He says that criticism has won as against the traditional view, and that it only remains to discuss the indemnity. We marvelled at that. But the situation is very different. A generation of Christian scholars, setting aside tradition, have presented a view of the origin of Hebrew religion, and have sustained that view by most burdensome processes of disintegration and reconstitution. After oscillations enough they have approximated to an agreement. And Professor Smith presents their case for recognition in the teaching of the Church. But stating a case is not settling a case. And we do not generally allow the men who make the difficulty to fix the indemnity. They have brought out their theory from the cloister, and subjected it to the judgment of the Church.

It must bear to be looked at from every side and in varied lights. Especially are there two tests that will have to be applied. First, is this scientifically sound? Secondly, is it adequate as an account of the origin and inner development of the revelation process that culminated in Christ? So far as affects the testimony of the Church to the world, the Arian controversy was not more vital, and certainly it was not so complex.

How long did that controversy sway to and fro? To what heights did the Arian power rise? It is with no light heart, we note the hold these views have in the Churches. It may be that the conflict of several generations will be needed. And we have no hope or desire save for the truth, the sifted truth. But there is much, and there will be more, to be said about the scientific soundness of this theory. The hypothesis is far and away the most violent that has ever been employed to reconstruct the history and literature of a people. If its working out be elaborate, its foundations are highly speculative. What archæology has done is to take away the justification for such an extreme theory, and to increase the verisimilitude of the traditional belief. In anthropology, too, and the science of religion, there are recent views very illuminative on the place of ancient Israel.

We would like to go back to what Professor Smith truly says at page 5. "The New Testament Scriptures were selected and defined no man exactly knows how, except that it was the Church herself that did the work." Ay, and to the consecrated people of Christ constituting His living Church this must go. They live with God: God works through them. Revelation is to them the ultimate reality, but a reality whose laws, and properties, and sequences they know. And if this theory does not commend itself to them as a vital discovery from within, of the way by which God has come into the knowledge of His creatures, then, with all its great names, it will have to go into the limbo of forgotten things.

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